On The Bayou

A Performing Play

With Music and Dance

Written by Earl La Martiniere

Taken from His Memoirs of Growing up Cajun

CHARACTERS

THE ARCENEAUX FAMILY

Alcide - Father of Family
Corrine - Mother of Family
Tut Tut - 1st Daughter
Madeline - 2nd Daughter
Ju June - Young Son
Older Ju June - Cast Member
Maw Maw – Grandmother
Tante Na - Old Maid Aunt
Tante Fen - Old Maid Aunt
Jean Claude - Future Husband of Madeline
Adam - Son of Madeline and Jean Claude

FRIENDS

Bo Key - Town Drunk
Dela - Lady of the Night
Clemma - Religious Fanatic
Myrus - Old Bachelor
T Dou - Best Buddy of T Man
Father Bourgeois - Priest
Bo Boon - Visitor
Clotil - Woman with a Problem
Ophyla - Woman with a Habit
Poonah - Mean Old Woman
T Man - Best Buddy of T Dou

FIVE CAJUN MUSCIANS
FOUR CAJUN DANCE COUPLES

DOUBLE CAST ROLES

Tante Fen / Ophyla
Tante Na / Clotil
Older Ju June / Dancer
DELA / Poonah
Emma / Bo Boon

PRECURTAIN

Projection of a typical mid 1950's Country Cajun House

Prologue

Just a note to prepare you for a trip back to the mid-1900s in central and southwest Louisiana. Earl Lamartiniere, the author of this play, was born in Avoyelles Parish in 1937. He was brought up bilingual, French and English languages. More succinctly, preschool children were exposed to oral hand-me down French and English from family and friends until grade school, and then the children were emersed in formal English education. Hence, Earl's early life was a transition in cultural experience as well as education as he went on to college, and later was a dancer and singer on Broadway and in California. It is while working with the famed entertainer, Chita Rivera in New York, that he was urged to write of his cultural experiences, especially related to "Cajuns." Therefore, you will be subjected to mixed sentence structure and phonetics throughout the presentation, bringing to life the authenticity of this time-period in Avoyelles and the South Louisiana life. *Laisse le bon temps rouler!*

On The Bayou

Act 1

Fifteen minutes before curtain, three Cajun musicians enter from stage right, in front of the scrim, carrying musical instruments. They sit downstage right on the apron of the stage and play tradition Cajun music. Both the image on the scrim and the music create the mood.

At curtain time an actor enters from stage left - in front of the scrim. He is wearing loose khaki pants, held up by suspenders, a long-sleeved cotton shirt, and a hat (Fedora). He walks across the stage to the musicians to quieten them, then goes to downstage center and stands on the apron of the stage. He removes his hat, holds it to his chest, excuses himself, and with a Cajun accent asks for the audience's attention.

I am Alcide Arceneaux, the father of the Cajun family this play is about. I do not have much to say in this play, because, like most Cajun households, the women do most of the talking. (He laughs.) **Realizing that many of you out there do not know who or what Cajuns are, I thought I would come out and use that excuse to "say something," and to tell you about the history and heritage of our unique culture. This will help you to better understand my family and their friends.** (Alcide pauses.)

The most surprising thing you will learn about Cajuns is that we were the first Europeans to establish a permanent colony on the North American continent. That's right. Three years before the founding of Jamestown, and fifteen years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, a group of French people from the Normandy area of France, unhappy with political and social conditions in their homeland, sailed across the Atlantic, and in 1606 they settled on a peninsula off the coast of what is now Canada. Because of their friendly nature, they soon made friends with the Indians living there, and with their help, turned this wilderness into a place of comfort for themselves. They called their new home "Acadia," after the Indian name for fish and became known then as … "Acadians".

But then, (Pause) **the English moved in. Because of their fear that the Indians and the Acadians would band together against them, they took over the territory and renamed it, Nova Scotia. But my people refused to take an oath of allegiance to the King of England - or to give up their Catholic religion. So, in 1755 British troops moved in again. This time … burning and destroying their homes, herding the people like cattle, and putting them on boats; separating families … husbands from wives, mothers from children, … and sending them out to sea. AN APPARENT ACT OF GENOCIDE. (**He looks down, hesitates for a moment, then looks up again.)

Where were they going? What will happen to them? Would they ever see their loved ones again? Thousands died of diseases and starvation as the boats drifted aimlessly at sea for months. Until, finally, they began to be unloaded. Most of them being unloaded along the Atlantic coast of America. But where were they? And where were the others! Unhappiness really grew, when they realized that they were back among the English. (He pauses.) **But they soon began to hear of a place that may be the answer to their prayers. A place where the people were of their own blood and spoke their own language. A place at the mouth of the Mississippi River. So, they began their exodus toward this land of promise. But unfortunately, this turned out to be a very long and difficult journey for them. Again … many died. You can imagine their joy as they began to arrive in New Orleans. But it had been ten years since their exile, and to their surprise New Orleans was now under Spanish rule. The people living there were Creoles; a mixture of French and Spanish.**

1st MUSICIAN (Accordion)

(Interrupting Alcide) **What!! Do not tell me that they did not want our people here, either.**

ALCIDE

(He looks toward the Musicians.) **Oh no. We were welcomed, alright.** (Alcide walks toward the Musicians.) **Just as long as we did not embarrass them.**

2nd MUSICIAN (Fiddle)

Embarrass them! Why would our people embarrass them?

ALCIDE

Because of the way they lived! The clothes they wore … The food they ate … The way they spoke their French. They even made fun of their music and the way they danced.

3rd MUSICIAN (Drumer)

Yeah. We were not "sa comme il fout." Not "fru fru" enough for them. We did not wear laces and brocades, and walk around with our noses in the air. (They laugh as he imitates them.)

ALCIDE

(Alcide walks back to the audience.) **So, feeling unhappy and unwanted where they were, my people once again set off to find their new home. But this time … they simply moved "outside" of the city, out among the swamps and the bayous. Where nobody else wanted to live! Because they had once been poor hardworking people, and used to farming and fishing, they soon began to feel comfortable there and realized that, finally, they had reached their destination. They settled there and have lived there happily ever since; being known now by the slang name of "Cajuns." Ending what has been recorded in history as:**

"LE GRANDE D' ERANGEMENT"

Those of you out there, who know Cajuns, know them to be very simple, free-spirited people. Earthy and fun loving, who love to laugh and make fun of themselves.

1st: MUSICIAN

But do you know that some of the people in New Orleans still feel the same way about us.

ALCIDE

Yes. I know. But by now, we have learned how to deal with that. (They look at him.) **We make fun of ourselves "before" that they can make fun of us. We laugh at ourselves "before" that they do.**

(He walks back towards the audience.) **But, like most people who have been displaced and rejected, there was this constant struggle within them. A struggle between - who it is that they "are" and what it is that they "should be." They dance and drink all night on Saturdays. But they are on their knees on Sunday, begging for forgiveness.**

(Alcide turns to face the scrim. He points to the image of the Cajun house.) **That is "our house." The house where me and my family live. Very typical of most other Cajun homes. On one side of the house is a sprawling live oak tree, and on the other side is a cement cistern. A butane tank and a stature of the Blessed Virgin Mary are in the yard. Two shrines to the Cajun culture of that time.**

The scrim goes up revealing the set of the interior of the kitchen. Alcide walks into the kitchen, then turns back to face the audience.

ALCIDE

(To the audience.) **You 'll come. Come on in and be with me. I want you to meet my family and their friends.** (He moves downstage right to stand in front of with the musicians. That way he can see the interior of the kitchen and talk to the audience at the same time.

SCENE 1

The interior of the kitchen

A table with seven chairs is center stage. An old wooden rocking chair is stage right, and a small table, with a coal oil lamp on it, is stage left. A doorway (stage left) leads to the outside and a doorway (stage right) leads to the rest of the house. Cabinets and a counter, with a stove and an icebox, are along the upstage wall. A dishpan and a bucket are on the counter.

Corrine, (pronounced “Corren”) is standing at the stove (upstage center) with her back to the audience; busy cooking and stirring in pots. She stops what she is doing and turns quickly facing the audience, with a concerned look on her face. (Corrine has a very stern, dominating manner about herself).

ALCIDE

(To the audience.) **That is my wife, Corrine.** (Corrine wipes her hands on her apron.) **She is a hard worker, she takes very good care of her family.** (Corrine walks over to peer out of stage left doorway.) **But she worries a lot … about everything. Which is usually … about nothing.** (Corrine returns to the stove and continues to stir the pots.

JU JUNE

(Ju June runs in through stage left doorway**) They comin’! They comin’! I can see dem cotton stalks moving!**

CORRINE

(Corrine turns around.) **Merci le Bon Dieu!** (She makes the sign of the cross.) **I was beginning to be worried.** (Corrine pulls out a chair and sits.) **Vien ici, mon bebe. Come and give your momma some sugar.** (Ju June runs into her arms and gives her a big kiss.

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **That is my son, Ju June. The baby of the family.** (Proudly.) **He is a junior, you know. Named after me.**

CORRINE

Ju June. Did you slop the pigs and feed the chickens like your Papa asked you to?

JU JUNE

Yes, Momma, and I ran some water for the cows and the horses, too.

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **He is a good boy. And has always been a very happy child.**

CORRINE

You such a good boy, mon bebe. Your Papa is gonna be tired when he gets home. Him and your sisters have been picking cotton all day long in that hot sun.

JU JUNE

When can I pick cotton, Momma?

CORRINE

That will not be too long, Ju June. You getting to be a big boy, mon cher. Je t'aime, mon bebe.

JU JUNE

Je t'aime aussi, Momma.

CORRINE

Comme bien, mon bebe. How much you love me, Ju June.

JU JUNE

Je taime' comme les couhon aime la boute. (They laugh.) (Like pigs love the mud.)

CORRINE

Comme gros se ca, Ju June? (Show me how big that is.)

Ju June throws his arms open as wide as he can!!

JU JUNE

Gros Comme Sa!! (Corrine reaches out, grabs him, and pulls him to her. He wraps his arms around her and they hug tightly. Corrine stands up and goes back to the counter.

CORRINE

(Corrine hands Ju June the bucket.) **Here, Ju June. Run down to the well and pump up some cool fresh water. Your papa and sisters are going to be thirsty when they get here.** (Ju June grabs the bucket and runs out stage left door.) Corrine goes back to stirring in pots.

Madeline (pronounced "Modlan") and Tut Tut enter through stage left door. They are dressed in dirty, sloppy, cotton-picking clothes. They have sun bonnets (Garsoliels) on their heads and look exhausted. Madeline is pretty and sweet looking. Tut Tut is plain looking and a bit overweight.

CORRINE

(Corrine turns and sees them.) **Au mes pauve te filles. Mais, just look at you. You must be tired.** (Corrine pulls out another chair.) **Venez ici. You'll come. Come and sit down. (Madeline and Tut Tut sit.)**

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **Those are my two daughters, Tut Tut and Madeline. Tut Tut was our first-born, you know.**

CORRINE

You'll must be tired. Vien ici, let me take off your Garsoiels. (She goes to Madeline and removes her bonnet.)

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **That one is Madeline. She has always been the perfect child. Never gives us no trouble.**

CORRINE

(Corrine touches Madeline's face.) **My beautiful child. Such delicate skin.** (Corrine turns to help Tut Tut – who has already removed her own bonnet.) **Tut Tut!! Your face! It is all red!**

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **Now, Tut Tut, on the hand, has always been…**

CORRINE

Tut Tut, didn't I tell you not to take off your Garsoeil! What am I going to do with you, Tut Tut? We are not trash, you know. We may be poor. We may work hard for a living … but we are not trash. (Alcide and the Musicians look uncomfortable.) **How come you want to look like trash, Tut Tut?**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut answers with her usual pouty, defiant, attitude.) **But I like the sun, Momma.**

CORRINE

That has nothing to do with it. It is what the people will think! What they will say behind our back. You know they talk behind our back, Tut Tut. Ever since we lost our nice big place "on the Bayou" and had to move into this lane, you know they have been talking. How come you want to make them talk, Tut Tut? How come?

MADELINE

Oh, Momma, leave Tut Tut alone. You know she is going to do what she wants to anyway.

Corrine throws up her hands and walks back to the counter shaking her head. Ju June runs in with the bucket of water.

JU JUNE

Here is the water, Momma.

CORRINE

Merci, mon bebe. Now go, go and put it on the counter.

ALCIDE

(To the musicians) **I have to leave now. I have an exit to make. But ya'll stay here and watch. I'll be right back.** (Alcide exits through the first right Wing.)

Corrine takes a dipper, scoops out two glasses of water, and hands them to her daughters.

CORRINE

Now you go and get ready, Ju June. Today is Saturday, and Tante Fen and Tante Na will be coming here for supper.

JU JUNE

Yea! Then we all go to the Fait Doo Doo! A CAJUN DANCE HALL (Ju June skips off through stage right door.)

CORRINE

(Yelling to Ju June) **And wear yourself some shoes. The last time we was there, you cut your foot on a broken beer bottle.**

TUT TUT

Why do them two old ladies have to be here every Saturday night? You know they just come here for a free meal.

MADELINE

And to go to the Fais Doo Doo with us to see who it is that we dance with.

CORRINE

Now hush up, both of you. You know they're family, (She gives a pleased look,) **on your father's side.**

TUT TUT

But nobody likes them, except for Ju June. And he likes "everybody."

CORRINE

Na, that is enough. (Corrine shoos them off.) **Vit Vit. Ya'll go. Go and get ready.** (Yelling to them as they leave through center right door.) **And hurry up, we all need to use the wash tub.**

Alcide enters through stage left door. He is now wearing dirty overalls, a long-sleeved cotton shirt, buttoned up to his neck, and a wide brimmed straw hat. He has a large bandana over his head and under his hat; to cover up his neck to protect him from the sun. His shoulders are hunched and he looks very tired. (Corrine sees him.)

CORRINE

Au mon pauve mari. Venir ici. Come. Come and sit down. (Corrine helps Alcide to a chair and helps him to sit. He takes off his hat, then takes the bandana and wipes his brow. She brings him a glass of water.) **Alcide, mais just look at you. I do not like to see you having to work so hard at your age.**

ALCIDE

But we got to get that cotton picked before dem storms come.

CORRINE

Storms!? What storms? It is too early for storms.

ALCIDE

The Farmer's Almanac says that we will be having early storms this year - and the Almanac is never wrong. Besides, old man Diagrepont told me that when he looked in his cistern, the water was rippling toward the center. That means storms coming. Early storms. And have you noticed how frisky the horses have been lately, running around with their tails in the air? That means bad weather coming!

CORRINE

But that does not mean you have to kill yourself, Alcide. We are sharecroppers now, you know. We work that field for half. We do not work for ourselves no more.

ALCIDE

(He drops his head again, dabs his forehead, pauses, then looks up.) **Where is the family?**

CORRINE

Getting dressed. It is Saturday, you know, and your two old maid aunts will be coming here for supper. Then we all go to the Fait Doo Doo.

ALCIDE

Do we have to go tonight, Corrine!? I am so tired.

CORRINE

What! And let the girls go alone, without being chaperoned! Oh, Alcide, just what would the people say? Especially when we have a daughter so young and beautiful. You see how dem boys keep coming around, all wanting to dance with her. We need to keep an eye on that one, Alcide.

ALCIDE

And the other one?

CORRINE

Who? Tut Tut? (She takes a deep breath.) **Well at least that is one problem we do not have with her. I have never been able to understand that one, Alcide. She has never been like the rest of us. She has always had her own head. Her own set of ways. But no matter. We still have to go tonight. Just because we lost everything and had to move into … this, does not mean that we have become trash. So, there is no need for us to start living like we was trash.** (Alcide drops his head again and dabs his forehead. Corrine walks over to Alcide and puts her hand on his shoulder.) **I know it was not your fault, Alcide. You was giving us a very good living. We had that 'Sucrelee' for all them years, crushing sugar cane and turning the juice to syrup. We was living high. But then … the "Americains" moved in. With all their fancy machinery. Your mules could not keep up, Alcide. We just could not keep up with the times.** (Corrine walks away from Alcide.) **You would think that coming from our kind of people, that we would be used to that by now. Being displaced … forced out … having to start all over again. But I guess you never do.** (Corrine turns back**.) But no matter. We still have our dignity and our self-respect. At least, we did not lose that.**

ALCIDE

Oh, alright, Corrine. (Alcide stands up with great difficulty and with Corrine's help.) **We'll go. For the family's reputation.** (He walks slowly, towards stage right door.)

CORRINE

(Corrine yells out over her shoulder as she walks back toward the counter.) **Momma!! Momma! Come in here! Come and help me to set the table.** (Pause) **MOMMA!!**

Maw Maw enters through stage right doorway just as Alcide gets there. He steps aside and lets her through. Maw Maw is shuffling her feet with her legs apart, looking like she is in pain. Her underwear, white drawers, are around her ankles.

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **That is Madame Dusaint. Corrine's momma. She lives here with us, you know.** (He exits.)

CORRINE

(Busy at the counter; not looking at Maw Maw.) **Help me to get the table ready. Tante Fen and Tante Na will be here soon.**

MAW MAW

(She looks at Corrine.) **Ump! This must be Saturday night!** (Maw Maw begins to set the table.)

CORRINE

And you know they are never late.

MAW MAW

Yep! When there is a free meal, those two old buzzards are never late.

CORRINE

Momma, don't you be talking like that. You know they family.

MAW MAW

(Indignant) **Not from our side of the family.**

CORRINE

That does not matter. They are still family. Besides, today is a special visit. They are coming here today to show off their new hats.

MAW MAW

New hats!! Dem two old crows have been wearing the same ole hats for the last thirty years.

CORRINE

Right. But they just got new ones and they are coming over here to show them off.

MAW MAW

This I got to see, dem two old sisters are so tight - you could open a Coca Cola bottle with their buttholes.

CORRINE

(Corrine turns quickly) **Momma!!** (She looks at Maw Maw, takes a deep breath, and gets upset.) **Now, Momma!** (Corrine points to center right door.) **You go! Go and pick up your pontlets (Underwear). You got to stop walking around the house this way. What if the neighbors see you.**

MAW MAW

Na, Corrine … you know I get this rash, every summer. Cannot stand to have nothing touch me, you know, down there. Which is why your poor old father, (Maw Maw makes the sign of the cross) **may he rest in peace, … never did like the summertime.**

CORRINE

I do not want to hear that … that is not decent. Now you go, go and rearrange yourself.

Maw Maw shuffles off stage right doorway at the same time that Alcide reenters through the first right Wing to rejoin the musicians. He is dressed in nicer clothes now, ready to go to the Fais Doo Doo.

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **Do not let all of that fool you. Madame Dusaint was quite "Une Grande Dame" back in her day. Not like what you see now.**

We hear a scream. **"Ahh!"** Everyone looks toward stage right door. Maw Maw reenters and goes back to the table with her underwear in place, but still walking with a pained expression.

CORRINE

Na. That is better. (Corrine walks to stage left doorway and looks out.) I can see them coming up the walk now. (Yelling out) **Ya'll come on in!! We been expecting you!!** (She turns to look at Maw Maw) **And 'you' … you better behave**! (Maw Maw gives a look of disapproval.)

Tante Fen and Tante Na enter thru stage left doorway.

Tante Fen is tall and thin. Tante Na is short and fat. They are dressed very old maidish. Black high-collar dresses, from the neck to the ankles, and wearing black "granny boots". They each have on "old lady hats" on their heads. They are panting and holding on to each other.

ALCIDE

(To the Audience.) **Those are my two old maid aunts. Never been married and have always lived together.**

CORRINE

Are ya'll alright? Can I get ya'll some water?

TANTE NA

Merci, Corrine, but we gonna to be fine. You know Fen cannot walk much no more, and I have this heart condition.

MAW MAW

Then why didn't ya'll stay home.

CORRINE

Mamma!! (Tante Fen and Tante Na stiffen up. Their heads whip around and they glare at Maw Maw.) **You know Tante Fen and Tante Na have not been feeling their best lately.**

MAW MAW

Bet it won't affect their appetites.

They start to "go after each other" but are interrupted by Ju June running into the room from stage right doorway.

JU JUNE

Tante Fen! Tante Na! (Ju June runs over to Tante Fen and throws his arms around her waist. Tante Fen pulls him to her.)

TANTE FEN

Oh, mon cher bebe! Your Taunte Fen miss you so much.

TANTE NA

(Sweetly) **Just look at them two. I have never seen Fen act like that with no other child before. She usually don't like children.**

MAW MAW

Not unless she can boil them in a pot and eat them.

CORRINE

Mamma!!

TANTE FEN

Look, mon cher, what your Tante Fen brought you. (She hands Ju June a little toy car.) **It comes from Woolworth's.** (She looks over at Maw Maw.) **You wind it up, and it goes.**

MAW MAW

(Sarcastically) **Gee! Now Mr. Woolworth can retire.**

They start to "go for each other" again, but are interrupted by Madeline and Tut Tut entering stage right door, ready to go to the Fait Doo Doo.

MADELINE

Tante Fen! Tante Na! (Madeline runs over to them**.) It is good to see you again.** (She kisses their cheeks.)

TUT TUT

(Coldly, keeping her distance) **Hi.**

There is silence on stage. Everyone begins to look uncomfortable. They look at each other, then over at Alcide. Corrine motions for him to come over to them.

ALCIDE

(Surprised and embarrassed) **Oh! I'm sorry. I forgot.** (Alcide bids farewell to the musicians and walks over to join the others in the SCENE.) **Tante Fen. Tante Na. I am so glad you could come to be with us tonight.**

MAW MAW

(To Corrine) **I though you said that they was coming over here tonight to show off their new hats.**

TANTE FEN

That's right. (Tante Fen and Tante Na strike a pose, showing off their hats.) **Do you like them?**

TUT TUT

But those are the same ole hats that you have always worn.

MAW MAW

Yea, for thirty years.

TANTE FEN

Oh no, mes ami … they're new.

TANTE FEN & TANTE Na

(They look at each other sweetly, then point to "each others" hat.) **WE'VE EXCHANGED!!**

There is silence. The family stares at them with disbelief**.**

CORRINE

(Corrine jumps in quickly) **SUPPER'S READY! Everybody go, go and sit down!** Everyone sits at the table with Alcide at the head. Corrine puts a large aluminum pot on the table and starts to serve Chicken and Sausage Gumbo with a big dipper.

JU JUNE

Oh boy! Chicken and Sausage gumbo! My favorite!

TUT TUT

But we have Chicken and Sausage gumbo every Saturday!

ALCIDE

Thanks to the good Lord, we have food on our table every Saturday, Tut Tut. Everybody, bow your heads and let us thank Him for this food.

Everyone becomes silent. They make the sign of the cross, and fold their hands. (The three musicians move from Stage right to center stage, behind Alcide. (Undetected by the others.) Alcide begins to say the blessing in Cajun French as the fiddle player accompanies the blessing, blending in with what Alcide is saying. When the blessing ends, the family leaves the stage as the kitchen set begins to move out (stage left and stage right), revealing the full stage – which is now the interior of a "Cajun Fait Doo Doo Dance Hall" A sign drops center stage with the name "T BREAUX'S FAIT DOO DOO" on it. There is a bar (stage left) with men drinking and talking and (stage right) two benches with ladies sitting and talking. The entrance is upstage center and the bandstand is upstage left, next to the bar. The three musicians go to the bandstand to join the bass and guitar player – and the washboard player now becomes the drummer.

The musicians begin to play a lively "Cajun Two Step" as four dancing couples come twirling onto the stage and begin to do a bouncy, shuffling partner dance called the "two Step." Members of the cast enter from the wings to watch and "egg them on" as the dancers fill the stage trying to (out do each other) with their own style, steps, and interpretation of the music. (free style)

FULL BAND

1. Accordion 2. Fiddle 3. Guitar 4. Bass 5. Drums

SCENE 2

The dance number ends. The dancers join the cast. The Arceneaux family enters through upstage center entrance. Alcide and Ju June go stage left to the bar and the six ladies head stage right to the benches. The ladies are interrupted by Bo Key, the town drunk, who crosses in front of them doing a drunken, uncoordinated jig. He has a half pint of whiskey sticking out of his back pocket. (**Bo Key** takes the bottle out of his back pocket, takes a swig, and lets out a loud, shrill, Cajun yell) **A-eeee, laisse les bon temp roule!!!** (The ladies freeze as he staggers toward them. He offers them a drink**.) Comme sa va mais aimes?**

CORRINE

Bo Key, le vieux fou, you get away from us. (Corrine fans the air.) **Ta sou.** (You are drunk.) **Come ladies, let us go and sit down.**

The five ladies go to the front bench and sit, joining two other ladies. One lady is holding and nursing a baby wrapped in a blanket. Another is saying her rosary. Ladies from the ensemble fill the other bench.

The band begins to play a "Cajun waltz" and couples fill the dance floor. The dancers proceed to waltz counter clockwise in a large circle, around the dance floor. The ladies pick up straw fans and fan themselves as they sit and watch. At a prearranged time, the musicians stop playing their instruments, but continue to pantomime doing so; to a simple

rhythmic tap by the drummer on the rim of his drum. That way the dancers can continue to dance to that beat, but the music will not interfere with the following dialogue.

CORRINE

Will you look over there at Rosney Juneaux dancing with the Fontenot widow. You know his wife died just six months ago.

TANTE FEN

Yes. And before that – 'he could hardly walk.' He could not work. They was living on "dis - a - bility." Now look at him out there. All shaven and smelling of Old Spice. Justa shakin' a Leg. Spry as a Banae Rooster.

TANTE NA

Maybe it's a miracle. (The ladies all look at her.) **Father Bourgeois says that miracles do happen, you know.**

TANTE FEN

Yes. But this one did not happen from saying too many novenas.

The ladies continue to fan themselves and watch.

TANTE NA

(Tante Na pokes Tante Fen.) **Will you look over there at la vieve Rosa Caumouche. She was in the hospital just a month ago, with "double pneumonia." The doctors said that she was not going to make it. Now look at her out there, just a dipping and a twirling.**

TANTE FEN

Huh. If that woulda been a good "milk cow" she woulda died.

TUT TUT

Don't look now, Madeline, but here comes that DuBroc boy again. (He is tall, skinny and unattractive.)

MADELINE

Oh no, not again. He will not leave me alone.

CORRINE

(Corrine spots him.) **Here comes that nice DuBroc boy to ask Madeline to dance.**

GERALD DUBROC

Excuse me, Madeline. May I have this dance? (Madeline shrinks back.)

CORRINE

(Corrine is sitting next to Madeline.) **Of course you may!** (She puts her arm behind Madeline's back and pushes her to her feet. He takes her hand and leads her to the dance

floor. They begin to do an awkward “pump handle” waltz. Madeline is noticeably annoyed and uncomfortable.

CORRINE

Don’t they look good together.

MAW MAW

(Sarcastically) **And they rich too.**

CORRINE

And they rich too. His father owns all of them rice fields around Crowley.

TANTE NA

We know that. You tell us that every Saturday night. (The ladies sit in silence again, fanning themselves.

The musicians go back to actually playing their instruments again. The dancers resume their dancing as the waltz ends. Everyone goes back to what they were doing. **Tut Tut** opens the book she has been carrying and begins to read. She slumps into an awkward position.

CORRINE

(Sitting up, alarmed) **Oh My!!!** (To the ladies) **DON’T LOOK!! But there is DELA by the bar.**

EVERYONE

DELA!!!

CORRINE

I hope she does not come over here.

TANTE FEN

Me neither. I do not want to be seen talking to “that kind of a woman!!” She is not of our class, you know.

TANTE NA

I’m surprised. This is the first Saturday night that I have seen her out of the back seat of a car.

CORRINE

(Interrupting) **Oh, My God!! She is coming over here!! Why does she always want to talk to me in public?**

DELA

(DELA walks up to the ladies.) **Bon soir, mes cousine. Mais, comme ca va?**

Tante Fen and Tante Na stiffen up, looking straight ahead, fanning guickly.

CORRINE

(Cold and with attitude) **Sa va bien, merci.**

MAW MAW

We fine, DELA. So how's business? (Corrine elbows her.)

CORRINE

(Coldly) **How is your family, DELA?**

DELA

Not too good. Papa's got the gout, Mamma's got colitis, and sister's got the shingles.

MAW MAW

Cha, Cha, Cha! Well, at least they do not have bed sores. (Corrine elbows her again.)

DELA

I had to come over to tell you'll some good news. (Excited) **I have just enrolled in Nursing School!!**

EVERYONE

(All heads whip toward DELA in shock.) **NURSING SCHOOL!!**

DELA

Yes! My momma has always said, ever since I was a little girl, that I was always willing to help the people in need.

MAW MAW

And your Momma was right, DELA. Cause you are still taking care of people's needs.

DELA

I think that working in a hospital will be exciting.

TANTE NA

Well, at least you are used to working the night shift.

DELA

(Feeling uncomfortable) **Pardon, mes amis, but I will have to go now. Some people are waiting for me.**

MAW MAW

Yes, we know. We saw them lining up in the parking lot.

CORRINE

(Corrine gives Maw Maw a look as DELA turns and heads upstage along the bench.

MAW MAW

Well, what you think dem men are waiting for? The bus. We do not have a bus!

Clemma is sitting on the bench saying her rosary. As DELA walks by, she jumps up and thrusts the rosary beads in DELA's face.

CLEMMA

(Loudly) **BLESS YOU DELA! In the name of the Father, the Son, and the "HOLY GHOST!"**

DELA

(DELA jumps back) **Get that thing out my face, Clemma. Or I will turn you into a "HOLY GHOST!"**

DELA scurries quickly across the dance floor, going out upstage center entrance. As she exits - half of the men at the bar follow her out.

CLEMMA

(Clemma shouts to DELA as she leaves) **But, DELA!! I am only trying to save your soul!!** (Clemma sits down and sheepishly continues to say her rosary.)

CORRINE

(Looking down the bench at Clemma) **Clemma why don't you leave DELA alone. And why do you always bring your rosary with you to the Fait Doo Doo.**

CLEMMA

Oh Madame Arceneaux, every place I go is the house of the Lord. And you have no idea how many "Glory Be's" and "Joyful Mysteries" I can knock off to the beat of a Two-Step. Besides, you know that DELA and I have been best friends ever since we was young girls. So now that I have found Salvation, I want to share the reward of "life everlasting" with her. That way we can spend eternity together in Heaven.

TANTE FEN

I do not think that Heaven is ready for DELA, Clemma.

TANTE NA

And I do not think "that" is the reward Father Bourgeois promises when you enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

MAM MAW

(Snickering) **Knowing DELA, she will have a line waiting for her at the Pearly Gates.**

CORRINE

(Corrine looks at Tut Tut.) **Tut Tut! Sit up straight and fix your dress. And put down that book!! No wonder none of the boys will ask you to dance.**

TUT TUT

But I like my book, Momma. It is much more interesting than those stupid boys out there.

The ladies sit in silence again, fanning themselves. Jean Claude, a stranger, walks in through upstage center entrance. He walks to center stage, with a swaggering, cocky, gait. He stops and assumes an arrogant "full of himself" stance, as he slicks back his hair and looks around - checking out the place. He is very sexy and good looking - with dark hair and light golden skin. He is dressed as a Trawler (shrimp fisherman) wearing a tight sleeveless under shirt and tight faded jeans. He has on rubber boots. All eyes are upon him.

TUT TUT

Madeline, will you look at who just walked in. That is the best-looking man that I have ever seen.

MADELINE

I see him! I see him!

Jean Claude walks to the bar and orders a beer. Then he turns, faces downstage, and leans against the bar.

TUT TUT

I wonder who he is.

MADELINE

I do not know. I have never seen him before.

CORRINE

(With great disdain) **I wonder who that young man is. I have never seen him before.**

MAW MAW

Must be the one I heard about that is visiting his kinfolk who live at the end of our lane.

TANTE NA

You mean dem people who moved here from Cocodrie.

MAW MAW

Yeah, that's dem.

TANTE FEN

Swamp rats!! That is what they are. They come from them swamps and marshes down by the Gulf. (Huffy) **Those people are not like us, you know.**

TUT TUT

What you mean by that, Tante Fen. They Cajun ain't they?

TANTE FEN

Well!! They call themselves that. But they are different from us, Tut Tut.

CORRINE

She means that they are a mixture, Tut Tut, of all sorts of things. Italian, Spanish, Germans. Whatever came off them boats going to New Orleans.

TANTE FEN

So you see, they are not "pure" French - like we upland Prairie Cajuns are. Our people came here directly from "Nova Scotia."

MAW MAW

Oh, get off your high horse, Fen. Cause we are not pure French either, (Tante Fen is insulted.)

The musicians begins to play "Jitterbug" music. The dancers fill the dance floor and begin to dance. The ladies continue to sit quietly, fanning and watching. Jean Claude has been looking around the room. His eyes fall upon Madeline … who has been staring at him. He put down his beer and proceeds to strut across the dance floor, toward Madeline, with a manly stride. The ladies freeze. Everyone stops what they are doing and turn to look at him. Even the band stops playing and the dancers stop dancing. There is a hush. All eyes are upon him. He stops in front of Madeline and reaches out his hand.

JEAN CLAUDE

(To Madeline.) **Would you grant me the honor of having this dance with me?** (Madeline starts to get up.) **Of course.**

(**Corrine** quickly puts her arm out in front of Madeline, stopping her.) **She's tired! She just had a dance!!**

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude takes Corrine's hand and looks into her eyes.) **You must be the mother of this young lady. No one here is beautiful enough to produce such a lovely daughter.** (He gently kisses Corrine's hand, then takes Madeline's hand, and leads her to downstage center stage - in front of the dancers. Leaving Corrine sitting there speechless, with her hand still in the air.

MAW MAW

Well! I guess you told him!

TANTE FEN

How could you let her dance with that … that stranger? You do not know who he is or what he has done.

CORRINE

(Corrine touches her face with a dazed expression.) **He is very polite. And smart too.**

MAW MAW

And "very" good looking.

The musicians begin to pantomime playing their instruments again, and the dancers resume dancing silently and effortlessly. The lights on stage dim as the dancers become a hazy background, leaving only a spotlight on Jean Claude and Madeline. Jean Claude takes Madeline in his arms and they begin to do a "slow dance," downstage, as they gaze into each other's eyes.

JEAN CLAUDE

I hope I was not out of place asking you to dance, since I do not know you.

MADELINE

Oh no, not at all. But who are you, and where are you from?

JEAN CLAUDE

My name is Jean Claude Dupre, and I'm from Cocodrie … which is down by the Gulf. I'm here to visit my brother and his family.

MADELINE

The Dupre's that live at the end of Oak Tree Lane? They are very nice people.

The spotlight changes to the ladies.

TANTE NA

A lot of them people who live down by the Gulf have Indian blood in them, you know.

TANTE FEN

Yes. And a lot of them come from those "pirates" that used to hang around there.

The spotlight changes back to Jean Claude and Madeline.

JEAN CLAUDE

May I ask who you are?

MADELINE

My name is, Madeline Arceneaux, and I live in the same lane. Only … closer to the bayou.

JEAN CLAUDE

I am not a very good dancer. I hope that I am not stepping on your feet.

MADELINE

Oh no! Not at all! You are very smooth. (Madeline steps into him and melts into his arms.) **But maybe if I got closer, I would be easier for you to lead.**

The Spotlight changes back to the ladies.

CORRINE

Why are they slow dancing!? Why is he holding her so close!?

The Spotlight changes back to Jean Claude and Madeline.

JEAN CLAUDE

I know we just met, and you do not know me, but I would like to see you again before I leave.

MADELINE

I would like that.

JEAN CLAUDE

What about tomorrow, at noon, where the lane meets the bayou. Under that big oak tree.

MADELINE

Where the mail boxes are? I'll be there!

The spotlight changes back to the ladies.

TANTE FEN

He looks like a "mixture" of things to me, Corrine.

The ladies look at each other and begin to fan quickly.

CORRINE

That's it!! We going home! Where is Alcide and Ju June?!

Corrine walks quickly across the dance floor, thru the dancing couples, toward the bar. Suddenly two men begin to fight and they fall into her. **Corrine screams.** Full lights come up. Musicians resume playing their instruments. Dancers and cast members join the fight. There is chaos on stage.

Jean Claude and Madeline keep on slow dancing, looking into each other's eyes, oblivious to what is going on. Corrine comes out of the melee, grabs Madeline by the arm

and pulls her away from Jean Claude, dragging her toward the entrance. Jean Claude starts to follow but Corrine turns and gives him a look that stops him in his tracks.

CORRINE

(Corrine yells across the room.) **Alcide!! Ju June!! We going home!!** (The family meets at the door and starts to exit.) **Wait! Where is Momma?**

JU JUNE

There she is, in the middle of the fight!

Alcide goes into the crowd, picks up Maw Maw, and throws her over his shoulder; fists flying and legs kicking. The family exits.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

It is the interior of the kitchen, midday, the next day. The Arceneaux family enter through stage left doorway. They are dressed in their Sunday best.

CORRINE

Corrine takes off her hat and gloves. **You know, I always feel like such a better person after I have been to Mass.**

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw takes off her hat and gloves.) **Me too. There is nothing like being in that loving state of Grace. Which reminds me, did you see what Grace Gremillion was wearing to mass today? That was the same dress she wore last week.**

CORRINE

Yep! And she wore it the week before that to old man Savoie's funeral. Guess the insurance business is not doing too good these days.

Alcide sits in a chair and removes his hat and tie. Ju June sits on the floor playing with his toy car and Tut Tut is sitting at the table reading the book she has been carrying.

CORRINE

Did ya'll see that "Grosse Dame," Madam Comeaux, act like she could not walk to the altar to receive communion? Father had to leave the altar and bring the host to her pew.

MAW MAW

Too bad Father did not see her doing the jitterbug last night.

CORRINE (Alarmed)
My pork roast!!! I hope it is not burnt! (Corrine hurries to the oven and opens it.) **Good, it is almost done. The skin is starting to crackle. Mama, come help me to make the dirty rice. Tut Tut, put some sweet potatoes in the oven. And Madeline, make the macque choux.**

TUT TUT
Pork roast, dirty rice, sweet potatoes, and macque chou. That is what we eat every Sunday.

JU JUNE
That's right, my favorites.

TUT TUT (Annoyed)
Oh, Ju June, everything is your favorite. You like "everything" and "everybody."

CORRINE
But I thought you liked pork roast and dirty rice, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT
I do. But not every Sunday. (They all look at Tut Tut, confused.)

CORRINE
What is wrong with that?

TUT TUT
Don't you understand? We eat the same things every week on the same days.

JU JUNE
That's right. And Tuesday is my favorite - crawfish etouffee! (Tut Tut gives him a nasty look.)

CORRINE
(Teasing) **Then maybe we can have your food, Tut Tut, delivered every day from "Mulate's Restaurant" in Breaux Bridge. That is where all the "big shots" eat, you know. I think that should be good enough for you.** (Everyone laughs.)

TUT TUT
(Tut Tut is not amused.) **And every Saturday night, we go to the Fais Doo Doo.**

MADELINE
With our old maid aunts.

TUT TUT
And every Sunday we go to Mass.

ALCIDE

I do not know what you getting at, Tut Tut. The Lord has blessed us with a very good life.

TUT TUT

Well, I think it's boring … and I'm bored.

ALCIDE

(Sitting up) **BORED! Where did you learn that word, Tut Tut. Corrine, where did she learn that word.**

CORRINE

(Interrupting) **Listen! I can hear a car coming down the lane.**
Everyone stops what they are doing and rush to look out stage left door to see who it is – except Tut Tut.

CORRINE

It's the Robcheaux's. Now what you think they doing out in the roads at this time of day? They already went to see their son, Wednesday. I hope nothing bad has happened. (They all turn and go back to what they were doing.) **Now what was that you was saying, Tut Tut?**

TUT TUT

I SAID! I AM BORED! And I cannot wait until I am old enough to move away from here.

ALCIDE

MOVE AWAY!! Corrine, where is our child learning all this?

CORRINE

Now, Tut Tut, stop talking like you was crazy. You know Cajuns never move away and leave their family.

TUT TUT

Well, I will! As soon as I am old enough, I am going to take myself to town.

CORRINE

Now don't you scare me, Tut Tut. You are not talking bout moving to Lafayette, are you?

ALCIDE

IT'S AT SCHOOL! That is where she is learning that. IT'S AT SCHOOL. School is not the same no more, you know, like when we was there. They are not even allowed to talk their French there, no more.

TUT TUT

No, Momma. I do not mean Lafayette. I mean, move! REALLY MOVE! To a place where the people are "different" and they do "different" things at "different" times.

CORRINE

(Corrine grabs a chair to steady herself.) **Don't say that, Tut Tut! Even if you do not mean it.**

TUT TUT

But I do mean it, Momma. And not just any old town, but a big town like … like New Orleans!

MAW MAW

Now you talking, Tut Tut, now you are just talking.

CORRINE

Don't you be silly, Tut Tut. You don't know nothin' bout that place. You never even been there.

MADELINE

I hear it is a beautiful, romantic city. With people living there from all over the world. I want to go there for my honeymoon.

CORRINE

Honeymoon! What you talking about, Madeline? And, Tut Tut, what you talking about? Alcide, what are they talking about? What is happening to our girls? I thought we was raising them right.

ALCIDE

THEY BEEN READING TOO MANY BOOKS! THAT IS WHAT IT IS! THEY BEEN READING TOO MANY BOOKS!

TUT TUT (To Madeline)

Yes. I have been reading books. And it is a beautiful, romantic place. With big two-story houses, lovely gardens with banana trees, and wide boulevards with streetcars. Right now, I am reading about a section of the city called, "The Garden District." (She suddenly becomes very dramatic.) **That is where the "Creme de la Creme" live. And every year at Mardi Gras time they have their very own "Society Balls," which are attended by only the very rich and sophisticated.**

CORRINE

Sounds like a bunch of "stuck up" people to me.

MAW MAW

Yeah, I guess Bo Key will not be going to that Ball.

ALCIDE

I'M GOING TO HER SCHOOL TOMORROW TO TALK TO HER PRINCIPAL !!

TUT TUT

My favorite place is the "French Quarter." Narrow streets with balconies, fancy restaurants and nightclubs, cocktails and "JAZZ." (She proceeds to "shake her shoulders" and do a jazzy dance.)

CORRINE (Getting upset)

Oh, my Lord! I cannot believe this! Tut Tut! have you lost your mind! Alcide. do something! She has lost her mind!

ALCIDE

(Alcide gets up, removes his belt, and shows it to Tut Tut.) THE BELT! TUT TUT! THE BELT! YOU ARE NOT TOO BIG, YOU KNOW!

Tut Tut stops dancing, looks at the belt, and composes herself.

MAW MAW

I went to the French Quarter once, when I was a young girl. You sure can pass yourself a good time there.

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut takes a deep breath, and goes on.) **Sometimes, I picture myself walking down those narrow streets. No, not walking … "Sashaying". That is what they do there, they … sashay. Watch. Like this.** (She demonstrates.) **Their feet go ahead of their bodies, their knees are together, and their hips swing from side to side. Their shoulders are back and their necks are long. You know, like an egret, when he spots a fish in the water.**

MAW MAW

Some of the "men" walk like that too, you know!!

Tut Tut walks around the room that way. Madeline & Ju June are laughing and enjoying it.

CORRINE

(Getting upset) **Alcide, quick, shut the doors and windows! Just what will the neighbors think is going on in here?**

ALCIDE

(Loud and very annoyed, shaking his belt at them.) **THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE TAUGHT OUR CHILDREN TO SPEAK ENGLISH.**

T Man, T Dou, DELA, Clemma, and Bo Key enter through stage left doorway.

T MAN (Loudly)

Mais what is going on in here?!

The family freezes - then go back to what they were doing.

CORRINE (Composing herself)

Ya'll come on in. I'll make some coffee.

They all move to the center of the room. Clemma is following right behind DELA, as usual, saying the rosary and pointing the rosary beads toward her.

T DOU

Merci, Madame Arceneaux, but we was just heading home after mass and decided to stop in to say hello.

CORRINE

Bo Key, do not tell me you went to mass with that half pint sticking out your back pocket.

CLEMMA (Scolding)

Yes, he did, and in the middle of the benediction, he took a swig and yelled "A-eeee."

CLEMMA

And you, DELA, (shaking her finger at her) **it is not proper for you to yell out to the priest in the middle of his sermon, "Y ou tell em hot stuff!"**

DELA

Oh, Clemma, I was just trying to give him a little "reassurance." Beside - he is kinda cute - for a priest. (Clemma gasps and puts the rosary beads right in DELA's face. She starts to loudly say the "Our Father.") **Get that thing out my face, Clemma, or you will have to dig in your behind with both your hands the next time you want to say the rosary!**

CORRINE

Na, DELA, I do not allow that kind of talk in my house, especially on a Sunday. You'll will have to go. Besides, I am expecting some company. 'Bo Boon Boudreaux' will be here soon.

EVERYONE

BO BOON BOUDREAUX !!!

CLEMMA

The one that had to move to New Orleans cause her husband, Clovis, caught her with the mailman?

CORRINE

Yea! That's her. She and Clovis had to move there because of embarrassment. This is her first time back in two years. So, she is going to be having dinner with us today.

CLEMMA

Well!! That whole thing did not surprise "me" when that happened. The way she used to sit on her front porch, in her swing, every day at noon, bout the time the mailman came by. She'd swing and she'd swing and she'd swing, with her legs wide open … and "no underwear." Why everybody could see her… (she hesitates; not wanting to say "the word".)

T MAN, T DOU, DELA & BO KEY (Leaning toward her)

Her what??

CLEMMA

Her! … Her!

T MAN, T DOU, DELA & BO KEY (Leaning further in)

What?

CLEMMA

Her! … Her Kitty Cat!!

T MAN, T DOU, DELA & BO KEY (Straightening up laughing)

Her Kitty Cat?!! ME…OW!!

T Man and T Dou pretend to have a "cat fight".

BO KEY

That's right! And one day the mailman petted that kitty cat.

T DOU

Clovis decided to come home early that day and caught the mailman … delivering a package.

DELA

And baby; "What a "package!" First class, priority mail – I am here to tell you.

CLEMMA

Now don't you'll be talking all that "dirty talk." I will have to go. (Clemma walks out stage left door saying the "Hail Mary.")

CORRINE

Now see what ya'll have done! (She looks at T Man and T Dou.**) And by the way. Wasn't that the two of you who started that fight last night.**

T MAN

(Proudly) **Yes, it was!**

T DOU

Boy, wasn't that a good one?!

CORRINE

But I though ya'll was the best of buddies?

T MAN (They put their arms around each other.)

We are … but it was gettin' late … and "somebody" had to start one.

CORRINE

But what did ya'll fight about?

T DOU

He called me a "coon ass."

BO KEY

So, what! You are a "coon-ass." And he is a "coon-ass." That is what the people call us, and we call ourselves that too.

T MAN

I know. I know. But that was the best excuse that we could think of.

They all laugh, except for Corrine - who is not amused. They start doing a jig; do-si-doing and changing partners, pointing to each other**,** repeating the chant, **"I'm a coon ass, you a coon ass, we are all coon ass" (YEA)" "I'm a coon ass, you a coon ass, we are all coon ass." (YEA!)"**

CORRINE

(Corrine grabs her broom and proceeds to break this up.) **Ya'll will not be disrespecting my family, in my house, on a Sunday.**

T DOU

But we were just having some fun - with that stupid name that people call us.

CORRINE

BUT don't you'll know what that name means?! Everyone looks at each other and shakes their heads.

EVERYONE

No!

T MAN

I never really thought about it.

BO KEY

(Raises his hand and starts jumping up and down.) **I know!! I know!!** (Getting excited) **I know what that word means.**

T DOU

Really! You do! (Everyone gathers around Bo Key.)

BO KEY

Yes! It is that … 'little black spot' … under a Coon's tail.

EVERYONE

(They all look at each other.) **Really?!!**

They begin to sing and dance again … to a Samba beat.

We are just a "BLACK" SPOT." We are just a "BLACK" SPOT". We are just a … (Corrine proceeds to beat them with her broom again.) **Na, that is enough. You'll will have to go now. I am also expecting Myrus Quibedeaux to be here soon.**

EVERYONE

Myrus Quibedeaux?

DELA

That old bachelor whose father owns the sawmill?

CORRINE

Yes. That's him. His mother and father are out of town, so he is going to be having dinner with us, also.

BO KEY

You know what happens when he gets around people!!

CORRINE

Yes. I know. But that is cause he is very bashful; and gets very nervous!

(They all look at each other.) **IT IS TIME FOR US TO GO!!**

They make a hasty exit out of Stage left doorway.

Corrine stands there, holding her broom, watching them leave. She looks at the audience with an amused look on her face – shaking her head.) **Just what am I going to do with them?**

(BLACKOUT)

(Lighting returns slowly. Corrine is at the table making final touches and arrangements. Madeline comes back into the room.)

MADELINE

Can I go to pick up the mail, Momma.

CORRINE

Not now, Madeline, we are about to eat.

MADELINE

But I am not hungry now.

CORRINE

Oh alright, but hurry back. I made a banana cake for dessert.

JU JUNE

(Ju June sticks his head out of stage right doorway.) **OH BOY! A BANANA CAKE! MY FAVORITE!**

Madeline leaves. Corrine goes back to the table.

Bo Boon Boudreaux (Clemma) appears in stage left doorway and strikes a pose. She has on (what she considers to be) a very elegant and expensive looking dress. But it is really homemade, ugly and overdone. Very colorful with lots of ruffles and bows. It is very low cut, showing off her big pushed up bosom. She is wearing six inch heels (for the first time) in which she is having a very hard time walking in.

BO BOON (CLEMMA)

What! No red carpet! After all these years!

CORRINE

Oh, come on in, Bo Boon. We was just talking about you. (Bo Boon walks to center stage to meet Corrine; staggering and bosom bouncing.) **You remember Momma, don't you?**

BO BOON

Yes, of course. (Extending her hand) **How are you La Vieve?**

MAW MAW

Fine, Bo Boon. So how is the "mail delivery" in New Orleans.

CORRINE

(Corrine quickly takes Bo Boon's arm and moves her on.) **And you know my husband, Alcide.**

ALCIDE

Comme sa va, Bo Boon. Cela fait longtemps que je ne t'ai pas vu.

BO BOON

Now, Alcide. Don't you be talking dat "French stuff" to me. I do not remember none a dat no more.

ALCIDE

But, Bo Boon, you have only been gone two years.

MAW MAW

And if you have forgotten after two years, then you are either senile or "just plain stupid."

Myrus Quibedeaux enters through stage left door. He is overweight, sloppy looking and extremely timid.

CORRINE

(Corrine is relieved to see Myrus.) **Oh, hi Myrus! Come on in! We are so glad that you could come to be with us. Bo Boon, have you ever met Myrus?**

BO BOON

(Bo Boon walks over to him, flirting.) **I do not think that I have "ever" had the pleasure. How do you do! She extends her hand.**

MYRUS QUIBEDEAUX

(He takes her hand, shyly.) **How do you do?** (Myrus Farts … showing no expression or awareness of what he has done.)

Bo Boon gasps and looks around – startled.

CORRINE

(Quickly jumping in to distract) **Your dress, Bo Boon! Come over here and let me look at it. Did you make that yourself?**

BO BOON

(Bo Boon walks toward Corrine with Myrus following close behind) Oh no! I bought this at "Maison Blanche." That is where I buy all of my clothes now.

MAW MAW

Must have been at Mardi Gras time.

ALCIDE

So, what kind of work is Clovis doing in New Orleans, Bo Boon?

BO BOOM

Oh, Uh!! He has a "very" high paying job. Working for the American Can Company. An executive position! (Myrus Farts.) (Bo Boon looks at him annoyed.)

ALCIDE

Very good! And what does he do there?

BO BOON

Uh!! (She gives Myrus a "I dare you to do it again" look. Then continues.) **He is a "Supervisor!" In charge of … overseeing … that the … overseers … Uh … oversee!**

MAW MAW

I think that is fabulous, Bo Boon. Especially since Clovis quit school in the second grade and cannot read or write. (Everyone begins to laugh.)

BO BOON

THAT IS IT! I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF ALL YOUR INSULTS! (Bo Boon proceeds to loudly tell everyone off in "Cajun French" and storms out, stage left door.Corrine runs after her apologizing while the others laugh.

CORRINE

Corrine stops suddenly; then turns to face the audience.) **Today is Sunday. There is no mail delivery**. (Myrus Farts.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

Lights come up on a set of the oak trees located where the lane meets the bayou. Stage left of the tree is a bench and mailboxes and stage right is a grotto with the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Jean Claude is standing stage left of the tree, by the mailboxes, looking stage right. Madeline comes running in from stage left.

MADELINE

I'm sorry I'm late.

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude turns and looks at her.) **I was about to leave. I did not think that you were coming.**

MADELINE

We had company. I could not get away.

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude assumes his usual "cocky" stance.) **I could not have blamed you, had you not come. I almost did not come myself. I usually don't do this.**

MADELINE

I never do this. My Mamma and Papa would be very angry if they knew.

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude does a complete change in attitude.) **I'm sorry! (He reaches out toward Madeline with both hands.) I did not want to get you in trouble.**

MADELINE

You didn't. (Madeline grabs his hands.) **Your hands. They're shaking.**

JEAN CLAUDE

Eh Huh!

MADELINE

(She touches his arms) Your whole body is shaking. You seem frightened. What are you afraid of?

JEAN CLAUDE

I don't know. I have never felt this way before.

MADELINE

What do you mean?

JEAN CLAUDE

I mean … I have never ever been afraid of anything before. I have been on a trawler in the middle of the Gulf during a hurricane. I been chased by alligators, bitten by a water moccasin, and hunted and trapped wild animals in the deepest part of the Atchafalaya swamp … and I have "never been afraid". (Pause) **But when I thought that you were not going to come today… I got scared.**

MADELINE

But why? Why would that scare you?

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude takes Madeline's hand and leads her downstage to the apron of the stage as the house curtain comes down behind them.) **You see** (he pauses) **I have never really wanted anything in my life before. Been happy with things just the way they are. Taking things just as they come.** (Pause) **But last night - when I saw you,** (He looks

away, hesitates, then looks back at Madeline.) **when I saw you, something happened. For the first time in my life … I wanted something.** (He looks right into her eyes.) **When I thought that you were not going to show up today, I became "afraid." I felt like, what it was that I finally wanted, had passed me by … out of my life … never to be seen again. And that "scared" me.**

They both stand very still, looking at each other.

MADELINE

I have always been afraid. Of "everything." Sounds, storms, the dark ,… school, my teachers, grades. But most of all ... Momma. Oh, not that she is mean or anything like that. It's just – trying to please her. Trying to be that kind of a person that she has always wanted me to be. Trying to live my life so that it will please the neighbors. (Jean Claude reaches out to touch her. She stops him.) **And then: there are … boys. What they want from me. Losing my self-respect. Momma constantly warns me about all of that.** (She looks right into his eyes.) **But last night, when I was in your arms** (She pulls her hand back.) **for the first time in my life, I was not afraid. I felt safe … I felt protected … I felt** (pause), **"respected."**

They stand quietly looking into each other's face. Then slowly, they begin to lean forward, toward each other, until their lips touch - very gently. They linger there for a moment - then slowly pull back.

MADELINE

Now … I'm scared!! (They both laugh.) **I must go. Momma will soon figure out that today is Sunday and come looking for me.** (She turns and starts to leave out of first left wing.)

JEAN CLAUDE

(He grabs her right hand.) **Can I see you again?**

MADELINE

Yes.

JEAN CLAUDE

Tomorrow?

MADELINE

Yes.

JEAN CLAUDE

Same time, same place?

MADELINE

Yes, I'll be here. (She leaves out of first left wing. Jean Claude leaves out of first right wing.

SCENE 5

The curtain goes up- It is the interior of the kitchen.

Corrine and Maw Maw, Ophyla (Tante Fen) and Clotil (Tante Na), and Clemma; plus ladies from the ensemble; are busy in the kitchen. Corrine is bustling about, happily assisting, and giving directions. Ju June is on the floor playing with his toy car. You can detect a feeling of joy and excitement.

Alcide

Alcide enters from the first right wing and walks to downstage center to talk to the audience. The ladies continue what they are doing, silently.

I thought I would come out to talk to you, again. But this time; to explain what is going on in that kitchen. They are having their annual fall celebration called - a Bourcherie. That is when family, friends, and neighbors, all get together and each bring a pig that they have been fattening up all year on table scraps, to be butchered, to provide meat for the winter, for everyone.

The men are in the yard, butchering the pigs, where the blood is collected from the pig's throat when it is slashed, and the guts are removed from the pig's body when it is cut open for preparing boudin. The men cut off small pieces of skin, with meat attached that is dropped into a large wrought iron pot full of boiling oil, to make a Cajun delicacy called "Cracklings." The blood is brought inside the kitchen for making a very popular Cajun sausage called "Boudin." Boudin is made from the blood, ground up pork shoulder meat, and liver, rice, and the Cajun Trinity, which is celery, onion and seasoning, all stuffed in the clean guts of the pig. The guts are thoroughly cleaned - inside and out - using a salt water and baking soda solution, and then rinsed with plenty of cold water. Boudin links are boiled in huge pots of boiling water. When ready, the Cracklings and Boudin are served to everyone thru out the day, (Rubbing his stomach) **Hmmm. I must go now. All of this is making me very hungry** (Alcide exits stage left doorway.)

The attention goes back to the happy atmosphere in the kitchen**.**

CORRINE

I am so excited. Here we all are – family, friends, and neighbors - tout mes amis – all getting together for this joyous celebration. Une bonne journe. (The ladies agree. Clemma is at the table, stirring in a pan of warm fresh blood.)

CLEMMA

That's right, ladies. The 'Good Lord 'has raised His hand again, and bestowed upon all of us … 'another one of his blessings. The ladies agree.

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw walks up to Clemma.) **Too bad the Good Lord was not able to "raise His hand," and bestow that blessing upon them pigs, too.**

Everyone stops what they are doing, and look at Clemma and Maw Maw. There is a sudden change to the tone of the event.

CORRINE

MAMMA!! Na, don't you be starting "that" again!!

CLEMMA

Well, I do not care what you say, La Vieve. Because I think this day is exciting. Hearing all them pigs running and squealing. Another joyful noise to the Lord.

MAW MAW

Yeah! As they try to get away from the men with the butcher knives. Wanting to slash their throats and take their blood.

CLEMMA

DON'T SAY THAT, LA VIEVE! DON'T YOU SAY THAT! (She throws her arms in the air, looks up, and gets very dramatic!!) **OUR HOLLY FATHER!! MAKER OF EVERYTHING ON THIS EARTH! I CALL ON YOU, LORD GOD! BY THE POWER OF YOUR ETERNAL LOVE! TO BLESS AND PROTECT ALL OF YOUR CREATURES!!**

(Clemma looks down into her pan of warm blood – turns - and walks briskly to stage doorway left and yells out.) **WILL YOU MEN HURRY UP AND SLASH ANOTHER PIG'S THROAT!! WE RUNNING OUT OF WARM FRESH BLOOD!! (She turns and says meekly.) Excuse me, ladies. But it is time for me to say another "Act of Contrition**." (She walks to a chair, downstage right, sits, and proceeds to say her rosary.

CORRINE

(Corrine is beginning to lose it.) **Clemma! I do not want another word out of you! MOMMA! Shut your mouth! And CLOTIL!** (She turns and looks at her.) **Stop digging in your behind!!**

OPHYLA

Oh No!! Not Again!!

MAW MAW

She does that all the time. Like she was digging for gold.

PAULINE

Don't let her near the food!

CORRINE

(Corrine loses it!!) **I cannot wait for this day to FINALLY be over. When them pigs are FINALLY cut up. And everyone can FINALLY take some meat and FINALLY, "GO HOME".**

CLEMMA

(Sweetly) **JUST LIKE JESUS, WHEN HE FED THE MULTITUDES!!!!**

This stops Corrine in her tracks. She grabs her broom and walks over to Clemma. She puts the broom right over her head. Clemma cowers. The rest of the ladies quietly "tip toe" back to their chores. The stage is tense.

OPHYLA

(Ophyla breaks the silence.) **Where's the toilet.? I got to pee!!**

CLOTIL

I KNEW IT! That happens every time she gets scared.

CORRINE

Just where do you think you are, Ophyla? We are not the Rockefeller's, you know! The outhouse is outside … in backa the house!

Ophyla grabs herself and runs quickly out stage door left.

MAW MAW

There she goes again. Marking her territory. Just like an old tom cat.

CORRINE

NA EVERYBODY!! Get back to work!! We got to finish making that Boudin!

JU JUNE

OH BOY!! (Corrine whips her head toward Ju June, and shows him the broom. His eyes widen with fear. He picks up his toy car and runs quickly out stage left doorway.)

CORRINE

(Corrine looks around the room.) **NOW!!** (She takes a deep breath and looks around) **That is better!! But wait!! Where is "La Vieve Poonah" She shoulda been here by now.**

EVERYONE

LA VIEVE POONAH!!

PAULINE

That old woman with all that hair on her upper lip!!

CLOTIL

The one everybody calls, (Clotil places her index fingers on each side of her upper lip.) **"GROSE MOUSTACHE!!"**

CORRINE

That's her. And whatever you do; be sure you do not look at it or mention it. Cause that makes her "fightin" mad.

PAULINE

That is the meanest old woman that I have ever known.

CLEMMA

And the bossiest. She don't get along with nobody.

MAW MAW

(Looking at Corrine) **So who invited her?!** (Maw Maw walks upstage to the counter with her back to the audience. She is very annoyed.)

CORRINE

(To the ladies) **Momma and Poonah never did get along, you know. Not even when they was young girls.** (Corrine walks to Stage Left doorway and looks out.) **Ya'll hush!! I can see her coming up the walk now.** (Everyone panics.) **Come on in, Poonah!! We been waiting for you!!**

The room gets quiet as Poonah (DELA) walks in thru stage left doorway. She walks to centerstage and assumes a tough, mean stance - as she looks around the room.

POONAH

WELL! WELL! WELL! JUST WHAT KIND OF A "SHIN DING" IS THIS!! Ain't you ladies finished making that Boudin yet!! (Poonah walks around the room.) **CORRINE! You put too much rice in that blood! PAULINE! Those guts are disgusting! CLOTIL! Get your hand out of your behind! AND CLEMMA!** (She steps back and looks at her.) **What are you doing!?** (Clemma shows Poonah her rosary.) **You get your butt out that chair, CLEMMA, and help them Ladies. And don't you point that "thing" at me, or I will shove it so far down your throat, you will be pooping beads for months!**

Ophlya

(Ophyla comes skipping in from stage left doorway, fixing her clothes. She runs up behind Poonah.) **I 'am Ba-ck!**

POONAH

(Poonah turns and comes face to face with Ophlya.) And where have you been? (A look of panic comes over Ophyla's face when she sees that it is Poonah.) **Been sitting on that toilet again, was'nt you.** (Ophlya grabs herself, turns, and makes another quick

exit out stage left doorway - almost knocking down a young man entering at the same time carrying a pan of guts.

YOUNG MAN

(He hands the pan to Poonah.) **Here are some more** (His head juts forward as he stares at Poonah's upper lip.) **GUTS.**

POONAH

(Poonah grabs the pan out of his hands.) **AND WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?!** (The young man turns and makes a quick exit out stage left door.) **AND DON'T YOU BE COMING BACK IN THIS KITCHEN, OR THAT WILL BE YOUR BLOOD AND GUTS WE WILL BE USING TO MAKE THAT BOUDIN!!**

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw walks downstage from the counter.) **Poonah! Why don't you pick on somebody your own age? Somebody who is not afraid of you. Like, ME!**

POONAH

(Poonah turns slowly and looks at Maw Maw.) **Well! Well! Well! If it ain't Madame "Mighty Mouth." All talk and no do!**

MAW MAW

Oh yeah! Well, all you been doing since you got here is run your mouth. Like a whip-o-wills butt during blackberry season.

POONAH

(Poonah hands the pan to Clotil and advances toward Maw Maw.) **You better watch yourself, Elda. Cause you know I whooped your butt once before when we was young girls, and I sure in hell can do that again.**

MAW MAW

That was cause you jumped me at school when I was wearing a dress and you was wearing overalls. You got the best a me cause I was too busy trying to keep my dress down so the boys would not see my drawers.

POONAH

Well, I don't know why you bothered; cause the boys had already seen your drawers. The way you used to sit at your desk, legs spread, and dress hiked up to kingdom come! Why do you think them boys in class was always dropping their pencils?

MAM MAW

Well! At least they did not point and giggle when they looked up my dress, the way they did when they looked at your "upper lip."

Poonah is SHOCKED that Maw Maw has said THAT. The ladies gasp and start to back away from them.

POONAH

(Poonah stiffens up.) **You know you was "Nothing" when we was in school. You used da walk around justa twisting your behind, and flicking your hair.**

MAW MAW

OH YEAH! Well, I got just one more thing to say to you, Poonah.

POONAH

(Poonah puts her face in Maw Maw's face.) **YEAH! And what is that?**

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw brings her fingers up on each side of her upper lips.) **MUS-TACHE!!!**

Poonah drops her jaw. She cannot believe that Maw Maw has said THAT. The ladies gasp again and move further back.

POONAH

THAT' IT! (Poonah jumps into a squatting, fighting position with her fist out.) Now I am going to have to beat your butt again!

MAW MAW

Don't be too sure bout that, Poonah! I may have on a dress again, but this time, at my age, I do not give a poute who sees my butt. (Maw Maw also jumps into a squatting, fighting position with her fist out.)

What happens next is an awkward display of a loud high-spirited quarrel between the two; circling and threating each other … but never touching each other. The ladies, who have witnessed this performance many times before, get bored and go back to what they were doing.

CORRINE

Will you two stop that foolishness. Just what will the men think is going on in here.

CLEMMA

(CLEMMA stands up and points.) **LOOK! LOOK!** Clotil is heading for the table.

Poonah and Maw Maw straighten up.

POONAH

Stop her!!

MAW MAW

Don't let her near the food!!

Corrine quickly gets between Clotil and the table. She grabs Clotil's arm just as her hand starts to go up to her behind and leads her back to her chair.

CORRINE

Put your behind back in that chair, Clotil, and finish cleaning them guts. (The ladies all relax and go back to their chores.)

(Corrine yells towards stage door right!) **Tut Tut, come in here!** (Tut Tut enters.) **Tut Tut, make some coffee and boil some milk so we can have café au lait.**

TUT TUT

Yes, Momma. (She goes to the counter.)

Ophyla walks back stage door left.

CLOTIL

(Clotil pulls up a gut out of her pan.) **Will ya'll look at this.**

OPHYLA

Boy, that is a big one.

MAW MAW

Yeah! Reminds me of Alfonse Thibodeaux.

CLOTIL

Alfonse Thibodeaux!? That old man that lives down the lane from me.

MAW MAW

Yes. That's him. I can remember when we was kids. His momma could not put short pants on him like the other boys did, cause that thing would keep falling out and embarrassing her. Like that time when he was an altar boy, helping Father Bourgeois to pass out the host. It fell out just as Father placed the host on Madame Comeaux's tongue. She spit the host right back in Father's face – along with her false teeth. (The ladies laugh.)

CORRINE

Tut Tut. Hurry up and boil that milk and make that coffee!

TUT TUT

Yes, Momma. It will be ready soon.

CLEMMA

(Clemma gets up from her chair and walks over to the ladies.) **Well! I do not think that that was very funny. And not the kind of story that should be told amongst women.**

CLOTIL

Oh, Clemma. We are just having some fun, while the men are not here. (The other ladies agree.)

CLEMMA

FUN! FUN!? Will it be fun when our Lord and Savior comes down on judgment day to see if you have prepared yourself to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? (Clemma shakes her rosary at them**.) I will be ready!! I have been waiting with great anticipation for "HIS COMING."** (Clemma raises her arms and looks up at the ceiling.) **For HIS "GLORIOUS" VISITATION.**

POONAH

(Calmly) **But the Lord has already visited you, Clemma.**

CLEMMA

(Clemma brings her arms down and looks at Poonah.) **What you mean by that, Poonah?**

POONAH

Don't you remember, Clemma? Last year! When we was picking cotton in Mr. Fonteneaux"s field? You, me, Ophyla, and Mr. Fonteneaux's nephew, Gaston? You remember that, Ophyla?

OPHYLA

(Snickering**) Yes, I remember.**

CLEMMA

(Nervously) **I do not remember that, Poonah.** (Clemma walks away.)

CLOTIL

How could you forget something like that, Clemma? And why didn't you tell us. You tell us about it, Poonah.

CLEMMA

We do not have time for stories. We have got to get back to work.

POONAH

Oh, but I want to tell it, Clemma. That was a very moving and spiritual experience, wasn't it, Ophyla.

OPHYLA

Oh yes, it was.

The ladies gather around Poonah, all except for Clemma, who is on the side, listening.

POONAH

It was a hot, sticky, afternoon. Me and Ophyla was picking cotton on the north end of the field and Clemma and Gaston was picking on the south end. Everything was quiet; except for the sound of our cotton sacks as we drug them through the rows. Then suddenly; me and Ophyla began to hear noises. Weird noises like … like moaning … and heavy breathing.

OPHYLA

That can happen sometimes, you know, when a breeze blows through the cotton stalks. But there was no breeze that day – everything was still.

POONAH

It seemed to be coming from that end of the field where Clemma and Gaston was picking. Me and Ophyla lifted our heads and looked out over there. Strange – we could see the cotton plants moving … and shaking.

OPHYLA

That was the only spot in the whole field where that was happening.

POONAH

And then suddenly, Oh, I still get goose bumps thinking about it. Suddenly, we heard this big, booming, thunderous voice come sweeping across the field saying , "I AM COMING."!!!

OPHYLA

Scared us half to death. Sounded like one of dem announcers on the radio. You know, the ones with those BIG voices.

POONAH

But although we was scared, and not sure what was going on, we both knew that we were witnessing a glorious and miraculous event.

OPHYLA

A long, anticipated moment in your life, Clemma.

POONAH

Especially when the next thing we heard was 'your' sweet voice, Clemma. Echoing across the field saying, "OH!! MY LORD!!"

OPHYLA

(Sweetly) **It was the way you said that, Clemma. In that same tone of voice as when you say your rosary.**

POONAH

That is when we knew that, finally, your prayers had been answered. The ladies have been enjoying this with muffled snickers and giggles. Clemma has been glaring at Poonah stone-faced.

CLEMMA

I think we have heard enough of this foolishness. We need to get back to our work. THE BLOOD IS GETTING COLD! (Clemma walks away.)

POONAH

But wait, Clemma. I have not gotten to the best part yet. That was not just a "Regular Visitation." For you, Clemma, our Father in Heaven had brought with Him - His only begotten Son.

EMMA

(Clemma turns.) **What you mean by that, Poonah?**

POONAH

Because the next thing we heard was Gaston's breathless, quivering, voice saying, "JESUS CHRIST"!!

The ladies begin to laugh and jump up and down.

CLEMMA

(Clemma walks over to Poonah.) **YOU WITCH!!!**

Clemma pulls her arm back to strike Poonah with her rosary. Poonah lunges backward to avoid being hit. At that same time, Tut Tut is crossing behind her carrying a saucepan announcing **"COMING THRU …. BOILING MILK!!"** Poonah bumps into Tut Tut, causing the boiling milk to splatter all over her face. **Tut Tut** drops the pan and **begins to scream in agony.** Corrine wraps a towel around her head and quickly rushes her out stage door left with the other ladies close behind.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 6

It is early morning - the next day. The kitchen is dark and quiet.

A shadowy figure appears in stage right doorway and crosses to stage left, stopping in front of the table with the coal oil lamp. The figure strikes a match and lights the lamp; filling the room with light. You see that the figure is Alcide. You also see that Corrine is sitting in the rocking chair, stage right, rocking gently and staring straight ahead. She has a throw around her legs.

ALCIDE

(Alcide turns to look at Corrine.) **I woke up, and you was not in the bed.**

CORRINE

I could not sleep. I been thinking bout what the doctor said.

ALCIDE

(Alcide goes to Corrine.) **Now, Corrine, you know dem doctors is not always right.**

CORRINE

(Corrine ignores what Alcide said.) **My baby's face scarred … for the rest of her life.**

ALCIDE

I refuse to believe that.

CORRINE

(Corrine looks at him.) **You saw her face, Alcide. It was milk. BOILING MILK. It cooks the flesh.**

ALCIDE

(Alcide walks away from Corrine.) **There has got to be something we can do.**

CORRINE

(Corrine looks straight ahead again.) **My baby's face…scarred…for the rest of her life. Thank God it was…** (Corrine stops abruptly.)

ALCIDE

(Alcide turns slowly and looks at Corrine.) **Thank God it wasn't who, Corrine? Thank God it wasn't, Madeline? Is that what you were going to say? Why? Because she is the pretty one?!**

There is silence. Corrine is tense. Alcide is looking at her.

CORRINE

You know Madeline would never be able to handle this, Alcide. She has always been the delicate one. She has always needed my help. (She looks at Alcide.) **What if something would happen to me; who would take care of her?**

ALCIDE

And the other one?

CORRINE

(Corrine looks forward again.) **Tut Tut has always been able to take care of her own self.**

Alcide walks away from her, annoyed. There is silence.

CORRINE

It is not her fault, you know, that she is different.

ALCIDE

Who?

CORRINE

Tut Tut. It was the "fe-fo-lays," (Alcide looks at her.) **I never wanted to tell you, Alcide, I did not want to worry you.**

ALCIDE

Tell me what, Corrine?

CORRINE

It happened back during the time that I was carrying her. In my sixth month. I had gone to visit the Landry's. You know them, the ones that live out, way out past Henderson Swamp. I stayed longer than I thought and when I left it was beginning to be dark. So, I took the shortcut home … through the swamp. Halfway through, I began to see them - "balls of fire" - coming up - out of the ground.

ALCIDE

What are you talking about, Corrine.

CORRINE

The " FE-FO-LAYS ", Alcide!! THE SOULS OF UNBORN BABIES!

ALCIDE

Now you know that is not true, Corrine. That is what we used to think! But we know better now. That was just gas. Natural Gas, they call it. Catching fire as it comes up out of the ground.

CORRINE

But I could hear them laughing, Alcide, like children, as they played among the trees. And crying. Every time one would hit a tree, they would cry. Like babies. And then … (Corrine gets a frightened look on her face) **… they saw me. They began to circle me, to attack me, to grab at my stomach.** (Corrine looks at Alcide.) **THEY WERE TRYING TO PULL MY BABY OUT OF ME, ALCIDE** (Alcide goes to her.) **They wanted her. They knew she was one of them and they wanted her. To be with them. To be one of them.** (Alcide tries to comfort her.) **I ran. I ran as fast as I could, stumbling, falling, trying to get away from them. TRYING TO SAVE MY BABY!!** (Corrine begins to cry.) **After that … I knew that my child would never be right. That she would never be like the rest of us.**

ALCIDE

(Alcide walks to stage right doorway and yells.) **Tut Tut, Hurry up and get dressed. We got to go!**

CORRINE

(Corrine stops crying.) **Where are you going, Alcide? Where are you taking her.**

ALCIDE

There is something I can do, and I am going to do it.

CORRINE

What are you talking about?

ALCIDE

I am going to ask for help from our "forefathers."

CORRINE

What do you mean?

ALCIDE

I am taking her to see Vieux Nok Broussard. (pronounced, "Broosarr")

CORRINE

Vieux Nok Broussard! - the "Traiteur"??

ALCIDE

Yes. He was passed on the gift by his father, on his father's deathbed. The way it was passed on by his father's father, and forefathers before that. The gift of healing burns.

CORRINE

But, Alcide, do you think that will help?

ALCIDE

Remember what happened a few years ago to my cousin, T Noon? When he and his buddy, Augus, had gone alligator hunting. An alligator got hold of his leg and nearly ripped it right off. He was bleeding to death. Thank God Augus had the gift. The gift to stop the flow of blood, passed on to him by his father. He was able to stop the bleeding long enough to get T Noon to town where they were able to save his life and leg.

CORRINE

I remember that. (Pause) **Then, maybe you should try.**

ALCIDE

(Alcide yells again through stage right doorway.) **Tut Tut, hurry up, we got to go! We got to get there before the sun comes up!**

CORRINE

Why do you have to get there before the sun comes up?

ALCIDE

Cause that is the way the treatment works. When the sun, which is a big ball of fire, begins to peek out over the edge of the earth; Vieux Nok will lay his hands on her. And using the prayers passed on to him, he will draw the fire out of her face and release it out into the air … to rise, and attach itself to the sun … never to be seen again.

CORRINE

Do you think that will work?

ALCIDE

I also believe in the power of prayer.

Tut Tut appears in stage right doorway. Her head is completely bandaged, except for holes for her mouth and eyes.

ALCIDE

Tut Tut, thank God you are ready. We have to go.

Alcide grabs his hat. He and Tut Tut head toward stage left doorway.

CORRINE

TUT TUT!! (Tut Tut and Alcide stop and turn.) **Tut Tut, mon chere bebe.** (Corrine reaches out with both arms.) **Come … Come and let your momma hold you.** (Tut Tut and Alcide look at each other, confused. Then Tut Tut bolts across the room and drops to her knees in front of her mother's chair and buries her head in her mother's lap. Corrine gently pats her bandaged head.) **Oh, my poor child. My poor, poor child. You gonna to be alright, Tut Tut. You'll see. You going to be alright.**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut looks up into her mother's face.) **I am scared, Momma.**

CORRINE

(Corrine quickly pulls her hand back - away from Tut Tut's head.) **SCARED! I have never known you to be "scared", Tut Tut.**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut sits up.) **That is because you have never known me, Momma. Because you have never "allowed" yourself to know me. I have always been different. Very different from the rest of you. And that has always been a problem for you. Because anything different has always made you feel … very uncomfortable.**

CORRINE

That is because it confuses me, Tut Tut. I never seem to know the right way to deal with it.

TUT TUT

So … is that why, instead of trying to understand something, you have always chosen to either ignore it or change it? I can deal with being ignored, Momma. But, there is no way that I will ever allow you to change me. Because you see, Momma, being different is beginning to feel "comfortable" to me.

ALCIDE

(Alcide Interrupts.) **Tut Tut, we have to go. The sun will be coming up soon.**

Tut Tut stands, and she and Alcide exit quickly through stage left doorway.
Corrine remains in the rocker, rocking gently and staring straight ahead.
Ju June walks in through stage right doorway in his nightclothes, rubbing his eyes.

JU JUNE

Momma, what is going on? I heard Tut Tut get up early this morning and get dressed. Then I heard her leave with Papa. Where are they going? Is she alright? (Corrine continues to rock gently, staring straight ahead.)

Ju June walks over to her.) **Momma, I do not like to see you looking so sad?** (Ju June reaches out and grabs the chair, stopping it from rocking.) **I talked to the Baby Jesus last night. You always tell me that when I have a problem, or there is something I do not understand, to talk to the Baby Jesus about it. That he will listen, and help. I told him bout what happened to Tut Tut. I asked him if he could make her well again. Because ever since that has happened, everyone has been very sad. Nothing is the same no more. We do not have fun no more. Even the food don't taste good no more.** (Corrine continues to ignore him.) **Momma, do you hear me.** (No reaction). (Ju June gets up on his tip toes and says into her ear.) **Je aime, Momma!** (Still nothing. He comes back down.) **Don't you want to know much I love you, Momma. "Je aime comme les cochon aime la boue.** (He laughs - but still no reaction from Corrine.)

Don't you want to know how big that is, Momma. (Ju June steps up real close to the chair and throws his arms open as wide as he can; staring at Corrine.) **GROSE COMME SA!** (He stands there … motionless. Determined to stay there as long as he has to, Corrine continues to sit staring straight ahead. There is a long pause. Then slowly … her head begins to turn - toward Ju June. She looks at him, hesitates, then reaches out and grabs him. She pulls him to her and wraps her arms tightly around him. He wraps his arms around her. They cling to each other. Then, she releases him, pulls the throw off her legs, and proceeds to get up.)

CORRINE

I must go. There is something I can do. Alcide is asking for help from our forefathers. I will go to the grotto at the end of the lane and ask for help from the Virgin Mary. She will understand. She was a mother. (She leads Ju June to stage right doorway.) **Go back to bed, Ju June**. (Corrine yells inside stage right doorway.) **Madeline! Madeline, take care of Ju June. I must leave for a while. Corrine grabs her shawl and exits stage left door.**

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 7

Lights come up revealing the set of the Oak tree on the edge of the bayou. Corrine is kneeling and praying at the grotto, stage right. Jean Claude enters stage left and sits on the bench, looking stage left. He does not notice Corrine. But Corrine reacts to his entrance; then goes back to praying. Madeline runs in from stage left. Jean Claude stands and she runs into his arms. They kiss. Corrine is stunned by this. She stops praying, does a quick sign of the cross, stands, and puts her rosary in her pocket. She gives the statue an "I'll be right back" gesture, then quietly walks over to stand behind the tree; in a position where the audience can see her, but Madeline and Jean Claude cannot.

MADELINE

I'm sorry I am late. Papa left this morning with Tut Tut and Momma had to run an errand, so I had to watch Ju June. I can only stay for a minute.

JEAN CLAUDE

I will not be able to stay long, either. I am helping my brother to build a shed. But I took a short break to see you, and to see if you were able to find the right time for me to talk to your Papa.

MADELINE

Not yet. Everything has been too crazy at home since the accident with Tut Tut.

JEAN CLAUDE

I understand. But I will have to leave in a few days to go back to Cocodrie. I wanted to see your Papa before I leave to ask for his permission, and to get your Momma's blessing. Then I can go home, tell my family, and return here so we can begin to plan our wedding. (Corrine is shocked by what she is hearing.) **I must go now. I will be back tomorrow for our usual noon time rendezvous.**

Jean Claude and Madeline kiss. Then Jean Claude makes a quick exit stage left. Madeline turns to go to the bench as Corrine steps out from behind the tree. Madeline is startled to see her.

MADELINE

MOMMA!! How long have you been there?

CORRINE

(Corrine glares at her.) **Long enough!**

MADELINE

Momma, I was going to tell you…

CORRINE

(Corrine cuts her off.) **Just tell me - that what I saw, I did not see! That what I heard, I did not hear!**

MADELINE

I cannot lie to you, Momma. What you saw and heard is true.

CORRINE

Then you are forbidden to 'ever' see that … that person again. Now run along home. I will not tell your Papa, and we will not talk about this again, EVER.

MADELINE

That person has a name, Momma. It is Jean Claude. And I intend to see him again, FOREVER.

CORRINE

(Corrine steps back and looks at Madeline.) **Madeline, what has this person done to you?**

MADELINE

(Pointedly) **Jean Claude?!!**

CORRINE

(Conceding) **Jean Claude.** (Pause) **Madeline, you have never disobeyed me before. What is it that this stranger has that is stronger than your obedience to your mother?**

MADELINE

It is called love, Momma.

CORRINE

LOVE! You already have love, Madeline. (Corrine grabs her chest.) **My love. A mother's love. What kind of love can he give you?**

MADELINE

It is called UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, Momma. Your love has always been given as a reward for being obedient. That can be taken away at any time, whenever you are displeased.

CORRINE

That is because I have always wanted the best for you, Madeline.

MADELINE

And you do not think that this is the best for me?

CORRINE

(Corrine stiffens up.) **He is not like us, Madeline.**

MADELINE

What do you mean by that, Momma?

CORRINE

He is different. He is not pure French!

MADELINE

But his heart is pure, Momma.

CORRINE

How can his heart be pure, as you say, with all those "different kinds of blood" flowing through it? Just what is he, Madeline?

MADELINE

What do you mean, what is he? He is kind, he is gentle, and he is caring.

CORRINE

You know that is not what I mean. Because I find him arrogant and full of himself.

MADELINE

That is because you do not know him, Momma. He only acts that way with people like you, who think that they are better than he is.

CORRINE

Madeline!! You have never spoken to me that way before.

MADELINE

(Madeline takes her mother's hand and leads her to the bench. They sit.) **If you were only able to know him, as I know him, you would see that he is really, very shy, and insecure. Like a frightened child that needs to be taken care of. And I want to spend the rest of my life taking care of him.**

CORRINE

Why would you want to do that, Madeline?

MADELINE

Because he makes me happy, Momma. He gives me courage. He makes me strong. He brings out feelings in me that I never knew I had before. I cannot see myself going on with the rest of my life without him.

CORRINE

And what about, me?

MADELINE

You've had your life, Momma. Now let me have mine.

Corrine sits there staring at Madeline - realizing that her daughter is determined.

CORRINE

But what will the people think, Madeline. You know we are not…

MADELINE

I know, Momma. We are not trash. But neither is he.

CORRINE

But that is not what my eyes see, Madeline. So that is not what my heart feels.

MADELINE

Why, Momma? Because what your eyes see, is that he is darker than us. That he is mixed.

CORRINE

What kind?

MADELINE

What?

CORRINE

(Raising her voice) **What kind?**

MADELINE

What kind what?!

CORRINE

(Strongly) **OF MIXTURE!!?**

MADELINE

DON'T YELL AT ME!! I CAN NOT THINK!! (Madeline takes deep breaths to calm herself down.) **Let me see. He told me that he was** (She counts on her fingers.) **French, Spanish, Portuguese, Indian, and just a little bit of……**

CORRINE

(Corrine grabs her chest.) **Oh my God! That's enough! I do not want to hear anymore.**

They sit facing downstage with their hands in their lap.

MADELINE

(Madeline looks at her mother.) **Momma, I wish that you could try to see him - as I see him.**

CORRINE

I am trying, Madeline. I'm trying. But when I see him … all I can see is … him (Corrine pulls out a handkerchief from her bosom - **sleeping on my** (deep breath) **CLEAN WHITE SHEETS.** (Corrine brings the handkerchief to her mouth and fights back the tears.) **You know how much I boil and scrub those sheets, Madeline!!** (Corrine drops her head on Madeline's shoulder and begins to sob).

MADELINE

(Madeline pats Corrine's back.) **It's going to be alright, Momma. You'll see. It is going to be alright. You know, Momma.** (Madeline straightens Corrine up, and looks into her face.) **Maybe you could start using sheets of different colors.**

CORRINE

I am getting to be an old Cajun woman, Madeline, set in my ways. A son-in-law. Colored sheets. (Corrine takes in a deep breath and brings the handkerchief up to her mouth again.) **You are asking an awful lot of me. But I will try, Madeline, I will try.** (They both stand.) **Now, you run on home and help your Papa with Tut Tut. I have to get back to the Virgin Mary. I put her on hold … and she does not like to be kept waiting.** (Corrine takes the rosary out of her pocket and heads towards the grotto.)

MADELINE

Momma! (Corrine stops and turns.) **I love you, Momma. And there will always be a place left for you in my heart.**

CORRINE

I love you too, mon bebe. And don't you worry about me. Colored sheets may not be too bad after all. They are very up-to-date, you know. I must go now. The Virgin Mary is waiting (As Corrine walks off) **and she is not going to believe what I have to talk to her about now.**

BLACKOUT

SCENE 8

Two months later - The kitchen is quiet and empty.

Maw Maw appears in stage right doorway. She has a look of despair on her face. Her body is slumped and her underwear is around her ankles. She moves toward the table - shuffling slowly, head lowered and legs apart. She picks up plates and proceeds to set the table … beginning on the, downstage, stage right, end of the table, and working her way to the, upstage, end.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois enters from stage left doorway.) **Madame Arceneaux!**

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw freezes and her head pops up.) **Father Bourgeois!!**

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois heads toward the upstage left, end of the table to meet her.)
I came as soon as I heard!

A look of panic comes over Maw Maw's face. Not wanting Father Bourgeois to see her like this, she quickly shuffles back to the downstage right, end of the table.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois stops, looking confused, then heads to the downstage left, end of the table.) **I hope I am not too late!**

Maw Maw shuffles back to the upstage right, end of the table.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois stops, then heads to the upstage left, end of the table again.) **There is a lot to be done.**

(Maw Maw shuffles back to the downstage right, end of the table.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(This time Father Bourgeois stays, upstage left, looking at her.) **I must see her right away.**

(They both stand there looking at each other.)

MAW MAW

(Maw Maw yells out and points behind Father Bourgeois.) **"Regard la".**

Father Bourgeois whirls around quickly, looking behind himself. As soon as he turns Maw Maw throws up her dress, squats, and grabs her underwear. Then using her body, arms,

and legs - manages to bring the underwear up where it belongs as she straightens up. (This maneuver should be choreographed to be funny and awkward.) Father Bourgeois turns back just as Maw Maw's dress has dropped in place to see her standing there with an innocent look on her face.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

WHAT?

MAW MAW

Nothing. It must have been a shadow. I thought it was one of dem bats that fly in from the swamp at night. Sometime they get in through an open window. Now, what was that you was saying, Father?

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois pulls himself together as he walks over to Maw Maw.) **I said …** (Breathing hard) **I came as soon as I heard! I hope I'm not too late! There is a lot to be done! And I must see her right away!**

MAW MAW

(Sweetly) **Well of course, Father. I will tell them you are here. The family has gathered in the parlor.**

Maw Maw exits stage right doorway as Father Bourgeois waits in nervous anticipation, eyes focused on the door. After a few tense moments, "Tut Tut" appears in the doorway.

TUT TUT

Father Bourgeois, we are so glad you could come.

Tut Tut's face is un-bandaged and looks perfectly normal.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

Tut Tut, my precious child. Come; Come and let me look at you. (She walks over to Father Bourgeois. He places his hands on each side of her face.) **Your face, Tut Tut. It is as lovely, or lovelier, than ever.** (He brings his hands to a praying position.) **You, my child, are living testimony to the power and the wisdom of our Lord. An example of His many miraculous interventions.** (He lifts up his hands.) **In whatever form? … granted to us … in His name.** (He makes the sign of the Cross.)

TUT TUT

Thank you, Father. Come. The family is waiting. Come and join us in the preparation of my sister "Madeline's wedding".

The kitchen set opens up completely (stage left and stage right) revealing the Fait Doo Doo dance hall decorated for a wedding reception.As this transition happens, the Musicians, who are on the bandstand, begin to play a Cajun Waltz. Madeline and Jean Claude enter thru upstage center entrance, dressed in wedding attire. They go to center

stage. The cast, dressed in their Sunday best, rush in from the left and right wings to congratulate them. Alcide pins a twenty-dollar bill to Madeline's veil, and dances with her. Corrine pins a twenty-dollar bill to Jean Claude's lapel and dances with him. The cast pulls back to watch. Then they begin to cut in, taking turns dancing with them and pinning money to their clothes. (The band segues into a "lively Cajun Two Step. The cast take their places around the stage as they go into a big rousing "Two Step" production number – involving the entire cast.)

(T Man and T Dou reappear again downstage at the end of the number.) T Dou yells out to T Man, **"What'd you call me?"** T Man answers, **"A coon ass."** (They begin to fight. The cast screams and runs toward them, joining in what becomes one big happy, fun-filled, free for all. The House Curtain comes down covering up the melee.)

BLACKOUT and INTERMISSION

ACT II

Ten years later, in the fall of the mid 1970's

SCENE 1

The House curtain goes up revealing the interior of the kitchen.

The basic configuration of the room is the same, except for several added features. There is now an electric stove and refrigerator, a sink with a faucet, and several "modern" appliances on the counter; such as a toaster, mixer, coffee maker, etc. A television set is stage right, and an electric table lamp and telephone are on the small table, stage left. Mirrors have been hung on the walls.

Corrine is busy at the counter with her back to the audience. She turns quickly facing downstage, with a concerned look on her face. She walks over to peer out stage left doorway, then returns to the counter. Tut Tut enters through stage left doorway carrying a suitcase. She has lost weight and is wearing a stylish tailored pant suit. Her face is lightly made up and her hair is pulled back in an elegant twist; looking very attractive. She appears successful and businesslike.

TUT TUT

Momma!! (Corrine turns.) **Momma! I'm home!**

CORRINE

Merci le bon Dieu! (Corrine makes the sign of the cross.) **I was beginning to be worried!** (She wipes her hands on her apron.) **Mon chere bebe.** (She opens her arms.) **Come. Come and let your Momma hold you.** (Tut Tut drops the suitcase and rushes

into Corrine's arms. They embrace.) **It has been a long time, Tut Tut. Too long.** (She steps back.) **Let me look at you.**

Tut Tut, you look … DIFFERENT. (She turns away.) **Come and sit down.** (Corrine pulls out a chair.) **You must be tired. Having to walk all the way from the end of the lane where the bus dropped you off.** (Tut Tut sits as Corrine begins to set a place at the table.) **We never did have a bus to come down the bayou before, you know. But you probably do not remember that, since it has been so long since you have left your family, to move so far away from us.**

TUT TUT

Momma, I didn't….

CORRINE

Did you notice the lane, Tut Tut? BLACKTOPPED. No more getting bogged down like we used to.

TUT TUT

Yes, Momma, I…

CORRINE

One of the men would have picked you up, but they are all working now, you know.

TUT TUT

Yes, I know, Momma. I can remember. This is the time of year when everyone is working their fields.

CORRINE

Working their fields!! (She laughs) **Oh no, Tut Tut. Nobody does that no more. Not since the "Americains" moved in. The government is paying us now, not to work our fields no more.**

TUT TUT

What do you mean, Momma.

CORRINE

You must be thirsty. Let me get you some water. (Corrine hurries to the counter and fills a glass.) **Look, Tut Tut. RUNNING WATER. From inside the house. No more having to run down to the well like we used to.** (She looks at Tut Tut.) **Or to the toilet.** (Pause) **That is also inside the house now, you know. Can you imagine that – doing your business "inside the house" where everybody can hear you. I just cannot get used to that, Tut Tut. That is just not decent.** (She hands the glass to Tut Tut.) **Oh! And watch this.** (Corrine hurries to the stage left wall and begins to flick a switch.) **ELECTRICITY. In every room. You probably do not remember that either, Tut Tut** (she looks at her) **since it has been so long since you have come to see your family – but we never had power lines to run down into the lanes before. Only along the**

bayou. For the privileged. (She reminisces.) **We used to be part of the privileged once, you know, "If you can remember". Back when we still had our nice big place "on the bayou." Before we lost everything and had to move down … down into this lane. But no matter, cause everything has been changed now. Ever since the Americains have moved in, you will see that everybody has become "very up-to-date." Nothing is how it used to be. Why … some people are even moving off the bayou - and into the lanes … without having to. I'm telling you, Tut Tut, it is all getting to be very confusing. It has gotten to where you cannot tell the rich from the poor no more.**

TUT TUT

Momma, calm down. Come sit and relax. You're confusing me. (Tut Tut stands and makes Corrine sit in the chair.) **Now tell me. Why aren't people working their fields anymore? And where does the money come from for all of these things?**

CORRINE

(Corrine looks straight ahead.) **Oil.**

TUT TUT

OIL?!

CORRINE

Yes!! Oil. It is everywhere, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT

What do you mean, it is everywhere?

CORRINE

(Looking at Tut Tut) **It is everywhere, Tut Tut. It is in the swamps. It is in the marshes. It is even in the Gulf. We are probably standing on top of some, right now.** (They both look down, then at each other, seeming a bit uncomfortable.)

TUT TUT

What makes you say that, Momma?

CORRINE

We found out that Cajuns are living on top of one of the biggest oil and gas deposits in this country. Can you imagine that? HERE. Where nobody else wanted to live.

TUT TUT

But what does that have to do with the Americains?

CORRINE

They are the ones who found it, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT

Oh! I see. (Pause) **So then, of course … they moved in.**

CORRINE

That's right. Now everybody is working. Everybody is making lots of money.

TUT TUT

Yes. Especially the "Americains!"

CORRINE looks confused.

(Jumping up from her chair) **Oh! I almost forgot. You must be hungry. I have something in the oven for you.** (She hurries to the oven and opens it.)

TUT TUT

I know. I can smell it. It's a pork roast. (Tut Tut jumps out of her chair to look over Corrine's shoulder.) **I can just see that crackly skin now.** (Corrine takes out an aluminum tray and shows it to Tut Tut.) **But that is a TV dinner, Momma!**

CORRINE

I know. You heat it up, and it is all done.

TUT TUT

But that is what everyone everywhere is eating now.

CORRINE

I know. I told you we was up-to-date.

TUT TUT

But, Momma. I was looking forward to those Cajun dishes you used to make.

CORRINE

Oh no, Tut Tut. We do not make that no more. Takes up too much of our time. Besides, that is poor people's food. (She looks at Tut Tut.) **We are not trash no more, you know.**

TUT TUT

What do you mean, Momma?

CORRINE

Well, look around you, Tut Tut. Can't you see that we are not poor, no more. And we do not have to work hard no more.

TUT TUT

But, momma. Being poor and working hard has nothing to do with being "trash." Being trash, as you have always implied, has more to do with your state of mind and character. Not the state of your finances. Besides, we were never trash. You and Papa raised us in an environment of love, dignity, and self-respect. We were always clean, had lots of good food on our table, and our hard work was always honest.

CORRINE

(Stiffening up) **Well! It might be easy for you, Tut Tut, to come back - after all these years – with your "big words" and your "fancy ways"- to say these things to me. But if what you are saying is true … then why did you leave us? Why did you give up your family? Were we not good enough for you, then.**

TUT TUT

Oh no, Momma. That was not …

CORRINE

And why did you have to move so far away from us? Couldn't you have just gone to New Orleans like everybody else from here does, when they think they have become too "high classic" for the rest of us? Did you have to move to this place that we have only heard of, but know nothing about? This … this … NEW YORK CITY. To live with strangers. Were you that ashamed of us? (She collapses in a chair.) **You know you cannot trust strangers, Tut Tut.**

TUT TUT

Momma, I …

CORRINE

If you only knew how many nights I have laid in my bed, not able to sleep. Wondering where you were, what you were doing, and if you were alright. (Corrine looks at Tut Tut.) **What if you had gotten sick, Tut Tut? What would we have done?** (Corrine starts to cry.)

TUT TUT

But Momma. (Tut Tut moves toward Corrine to comfort her**.) You may not believe this, but they have doctors and hospitals in New York City, also.**

Madeline enters through stage left doorway. She is pregnant and holding a young boy by the hand.

MADELINE

Tut Tut!!

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut stops and turns.) **Madeline!!** They rush to each other and embrace.

MADELINE

(Madeline steps back and looks Tut Tut over.) **Tut Tut, mai you look … FABULOUS.**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut turns to show herself off.) **Thanks. And you look … PREGNANT.** (They laugh.) **And who is this handsome young man with you?**

MADELINE

That is my first born, Adam.

CORRINE

(Corrine stands up and walks away.) **Well at least I can count on "somebody" to give me grandchildren.** (Tut Tut ignores that remark.)

TUT TUT

(Kneeling in front of Adam.) **Adam! Vous et un jolie grand garcon, mon bebe.**

Adam stares at her.

MADELINE

He does not speak French, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT

Does not speak French? Why?

CORRINE

Nobody does that no more either, Tut Tut. The Americains would…

TUT TUT

(Whipping her head toward Corrine**) THINK WE ARE TRASH?!**

Corrine is stunned by this response.

MADELINE

(Sensing a conflict) **Adam, you go outside and play, mon Bebe.** (He leaves.)

CORRINE

(Corrine heads angrily toward stage left doorway.) **Where is Momma?!! She should have been here by now!**

TUT TUT

MAW MAW!! Oh my God, I forgot all about Maw Maw! (Tut Tut rushes to stage right doorway and yells.) **Maw Maw!! Where are you? It's Tut Tut. Come in here!!**

MADELINE

She is not in there, Tut Tut. (Pause) **She is in a home.**

TUT TUT

In a home? What do you mean, Madeline? This is her home!

CORRINE

We put her in a home, Tut Tut, with all the other old people. That is what we do now, we put them in a home. The way it's suppose to be. They are much better off there than here with us, you know.

TUT TUT

Is that what the "Americains" told you?!!

Maw Maw enters stage left doorway sitting in a wheelchair being pushed by a nurse.

TUT TUT

Maw Maw!! (Tut Tut rushes to her. She gives her a big hug and a kiss.) **Maw Maw, I have missed you so much.** (Maw Maw looks at her, but does not react.) **Maw Maw, don't you remember me?! It's Tut Tut.** (Tut Tut looks at Corrine and Madeline.) **She does not remember me!!**

MADELINE

She has been sedated, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT

Sedated!! What for.

CORRINE

That is what they do now with the old people. They sedate them. It's the latest thing. Makes them much more happy and more content.

TUT TUT

(To the nurse) **Why is she sedated?**

NURSE

For fighting.

TUT TUT

Fighting!

NURSE

Yes. She and that other old lady, Poonah, were fighting again.

TUT TUT

But that is what they have always done, ever since they were young girls. But they never touch or hurt each other. That is just their way of communicating.

NURSE

But they drive me crazy.

TUT TUT

Then maybe you should try sedating yourself.

The nurse walks out stage left doorway in a huff, leaving Maw Maw behind in her wheelchair.

Clotil, Ophlya, and Myrus enter at the same time. Clotil is outrageously overdressed and Ophlya is sporting a huge overdone hairdo. (Beehive). Myrus is wearing a suit, bowtie, and spats**.**

CLOTIL

(Clotil walks over to Tut Tut.) **Tut Tut! Mon chere! Mais just look at you. You are so skinny.** (Circling and looking her over) **Nothing but skin and bones. Are you sick? Look at her, OPHYLA. She is sick.**

OPHYLA

That is because of that "wild life" she is living. In that big city where she lives now.

Corrine turns to hear what they are saying.

CLOTIL

And your clothes, Tut Tut. They are so stylish. How can you afford such expensive clothes?

OPHLYA

She's probably got a "Sugar Daddy." I hear that everyone living in New York City has one.

CORRINE

What do you mean by that, OPHLYA?

TUT TUT

Oh, Momma, they are just having fun with me. And what about the two of you? You certainly look different from the last time I saw you.

OPHYLA

Oh, thank you, Tut Tut. Thank you.

CLOTIL

We were afraid that you would not notice. It is not easy to be sophisticated, you know.

TUT TUT

But why the big change?

CLOTIL

Well. With all the new people and all the new money coming in, we decided to become "businesswomen."

TUT TUT

Businesswomen!! (Concerned) **What kind of businesswomen?**

CLOTIL

I have opened a boutique, Tut Tut. The first on the bayou, called "TRE CHIC" featuring all of the latest fashions from "Paree" (Clotil turns and shows herself off) **as you can see.**

OPHYLA

And I have become the first hairdresser on the bayou. With my very own salon called, "LA MAISON DE (Ophyla pats her hair.) **BEAUTI."**

TUT TUT

I must say that I am very proud of both of you. But what about those "problems" you used to have. How does that fit your business image?

CLOTIL

I must confess, Tut Tut, that I still do have my "habit." But not to worry, cause you will see that, now, I always wear a pair of these fancy lace gloves. So now … when I dig in my butt. (scratch – scratch – scratch) **I do it with class.**

OPHYLA

And I'm afraid that, I too, still have my "problem." But since I have been watching a lot of TV, things are a lot different now, when I pee. I no longer embarrass my friends, cause now, I'm wearing – DEPENDS.

CLOTIL

(Clotil rolls her eyes) **Thank you, June Alyson.**

TUT TUT

And what about you, Myrus? You certainly look dapper and very successful.

MYRUS

My mother and father have passed since I saw you last, and left me the sawmill and quite a bit of cash. So now that I too am a businessman, I have to be … smart. And do it different now when I (they all look at him) **"pass my gas." I am a gentleman now, you will see. Cause now I say, "Eh! Excuse me.**

T Man and T Dou come rushing in through stage door left and begin to circle Tut Tut, teasing her.

T MAN

Aaa yi yi, hot momma!

T DOU

Ooh wee, sexy baby!

CORRINE

(Corrine grabs her broom and beats them with it.) **Don't you two come in here disrespecting my child.** (Corrine looks at Tut Tut.) **Even though she seems to have brought that upon her own self.**

TUT TUT

Momma, leave them alone. They are just acting the fool, like they always have. (She looks at T Man and T Dou.) **Are you two still fighting with each other like you used to?**

T MAN

Oh no, Tut Tut. We do not do that no more.

T DOU

We are not allowed to call each other "coon asses" no more, since the Americains have moved in.

TUT TUT

Really? Why?

T MAN

The Americains say that that word is … what is it, T DOU? (They both struggle to pronounce the words.) **O-ffen-sive and de-rog-a-tory. That's it.** (Together) **OFFENSIVE and DEROGATORY.**

TUT TUT

Terrific, guys! What a great lesson you have learned. We must begin to take pride in ourselves. (They both straighten up with pride.) **And believe that we are as good as anybody else.**

T MAN

You're right, Tut Tut! You're right! Even though T DOU is still a "Coon Ass."

T DOU

What! What'd you call me!? (They start to fight and Corrine beats them with her broom again.)

TUT TUT

By the way guys, where are DELA and Clemma? You always hang out together.

T MAN

Our local "take em all on" gal, DELA, does not live here no more. After she finished nursing school, she moved to Baton Rouge, where she is now a nurse at Lady of the Lake Hospital.

T DOU

And boy, do we miss her. She was fun, and really enjoyed what she was doing. Not like the ones we have now; since the Americains moved in.

T MAN

Right! And she was free too. The ones now carry a "timer" and "change" with them.

T DOU

And <u>that</u> is costing me a fortune. Also, that ticking sound makes me very nervous.

TUT TUT

So how is DELA doing in Baton Rouge?

T MAN

Would you believe? She met a doctor there, a widower with three children, married him, and she is very happy being a good wife and mother.

TUT TUT

How wonderful!! And what about Clemma?

T MAN

(<u>T Man</u> and <u>T Dou</u> drop their heads.) **She has left us too, Tut Tut. She was taken away from us – by the angels.**

TUT TUT

The Angels. Oh no,

T DOU

Yes. Angels … From "Hell."

Tut Tut

Oh my God! What do you mean by that, T Dou?

T DOU

It all happened this one day when, as if out of nowhere, these Angels, a whole bunch of them, came flying down the bayou.

T MAN

All riding motorcycles and wearing black leather jackets.

TUT TUT

OH! (She pauses.**) You mean the "Hell's Angels?"**

T MAN

Right. They kept going up and down the bayou, very fast, making lots of noise, scaring everybody. Everyone ran inside their houses and locked their doors. All except Clemma. She ran out in the road and jumped on one of dem motorcycles, behind one of dem Angels. She was last seen riding out of town holding on tightly to him, showing everybody her middle finger. Na, what you think she meant by that, Tut Tut?

TUT TUT

Oh! Uh! That is a sign, T Man, that means – "see you later."

EVERYONE

Oh! How nice!!!

Alcide and Jean Claude appear in stage left doorway. They are dressed as oil field workers. Tut Tut sees them.

TUT TUT

PAPA!! (She leaves the others and walks slowly up to him.) **It is so good to see you, Papa.** (She kisses his check.) **I have missed you so much.**

ALCIDE

And I have missed you too, my child. It is good to see you looking so well and happy. I am glad that you could take some time off to come and spend some time with us.

TUT TUT

Thank you, Papa. And it is good to see you, also, Jean Claude. But why are the two of you dressed like this?

JEAN CLAUDE

It is what we wear to our new jobs.

TUT TUT

New jobs?!

JEAN CLAUDE

At the oil refinery, built by the Americains. Your Papa is a plant manager there and Ju June and I work on pipelines and storage tanks.

TUT TUT

Terrific! And where is Ju June?

ALCIDE

Putting the new car in the garage.

TUT TUT

New car?!

ALCIDE

(Proudly) **Ford Fairlane, fully loaded, with automatic drive.**

TUT TUT

Oh, Papa!! What you have always wanted.

Older Ju June (Cast Member) walks in through stage door left.

TUT TUT

(Seeing him) **Ju June!!!** (Tut Tut runs up to him and throws her arms around his neck. She kisses his face and hugs his neck; then steps back.) **Oh my God, Ju June, Just look at you! You have gotten to be so tall and so handsome. What happened to my little baby brother?**

JU JUNE

(With a Cajun accent) **Mai, I don't know. I woke up one morning and he was gone. Sorry bout that Tut Tut.** (They laugh and embrace again.)

TUT TUT

(Turning to the others**) I am so happy. Here I am home with family and friends. All the people I love.** (Tut Tut looks around.) **But wait, where are Tante Fen and Tante Na? It's Saturday. They should be here by now.**

ALCIDE

Tante Fen and Tante Na do not leave their house no more. Fen has taken to her bed and Na is taking care of her. No one has seen them in quite some time, except for Ju June, who brings them their groceries and takes them to the doctor.

MAW MAW

(Still sitting in her wheelchair; blurts out.) **GOOD!! Then that means that they not mooching off other people no more, like they used to.**

Everyone turns to look at Maw Maw and begins to laugh. Tut Tut raises her hand to quiet them, then walks over to Maw Maw.

TUT TUT

Maw Maw!

MAW MAW

(Sitting up) **Is that you, Tut Tut?**

TUT TUT

Yes, Maw Maw, it's me.

MAW MAW

You've come back?

TUT TUT

Yes, Maw Maw, I'm back.

MAW MAW

Does that mean you have forgiven me?

TUT TUT

Forgiven you. For what?

MAW MAW

I'm not sure, Tut Tut. I'm not sure. But every night when I lay in that bed, in that place where I am now, I think. What did I do for them to put me in here? And for Tut Tut to have to leave. I must have been bad. I must have been very bad.

TUT TUT

Oh no, Maw Maw!

MAW MAW

I was driving ya'll crazy, wasn't I? (She looks at Tut Tut.) **That's it, isn't it. I was driving ya'll crazy. I'm sorry, Tut Tut. But I was just being me. Just being that kind of a person that I really am.**

Tut Tut

You're right, Maw Maw! I did leave because of you. And yes, (She puts both hands on the arm of the chair and speaks directly to her. You did make me crazy – crazy with determination." Because it was you, Maw Maw. Yes, you – who helped me to recognize who I was, and what it was that I wanted, and that gave me the courage to do something about it. (She kneels next to the chair and takes Maw Maw's hand.) **You want to know something, Maw Maw? You have always reminded me of one of those Cypress trees growing alongside the bayou.** (She rubs Maw Maw's hand.) **Weather beaten and worn, gathering lots of moss through the years, but still TOUGH. Determined to make it through another season. And you know, Maw Maw, that Cypress stump next to you - is me. Your off-shoot. The extension of who you are. Ready to replace you.** (She kisses her hand then straightens up and turns to the

others.) **Now, why don't we all have chicken and Sausage gumbo, then go to the Fait Do Do like we used to.**

Corrine

I do not make chicken and sausage gumbo every Saturday like I used to, Tut Tut, Tonight we are having a broccoli and cheese casserole. (Everyone looks at each other disapprovingly.) **A recipe from one of the Americans.**

JU JUNE

Oh boy! A broccoli and cheese casserole. My favorite.

ALCIDE

And we do not go to the Fais Doo Doo every Saturday night either, like we use too. That place is not what it used to be.

JU JUNE

(Enthusiastically) **That's right! It's a DISCO now!!**

TUT TUT

A DISCO??

A sign drops center stage saying "T Breaux's Disco." The kitchen set moves out stage left and stage right revealing the Fait Do Do Dance Hall. Lights dim and a mirror ball descends illuminating the stage. The Sound of Disco music is heard as smoke fills the stage. The six dancing couples enter from the wings doing "disco" choreograph. Ju June joins them. Cast members, consisting of locals and oil field workers, enter and scatter to different areas of the stage; drinking, "smoking" and " making out".

The older characters move downstage – toward the audience and take turns stepping forward to speak directly to them.

CORRINE

It is only for the young now, you know.

MADELINE

But not too young. Nobody under eighteen is allowed to be there no more.

ALCIDE

That is because they are enforcing the law. We never did pay no attention to that law, before.

JEAN CLAUDE

The old people do not go there no more, you know.

MAW MAW

That is because they do not want us there! They say we are only there to watch.

T MAN

Watch!! Who wants to watch?! The things they do now make even me blush.

T DOU

The fights they have now. <u>They are for real!</u> Somebody could get hurt.

MYRUS

And the music! It's got no beat. You can't do the Two Step to that.

OPHYLA

The place is so dark now. Dark and (she fans the air) **"smokey."**

CLOTIL

Yeah, FUNNY-SMELLING-SMOKE!!

A siren goes off and spotlights fill the stage. It's a raid! Everyone panics and runs offstage.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

The Kitchen – Two Days Later

<u>Madeline</u> is sitting in the rocking chair crocheting. <u>Corrine</u> is sitting in a chair snapping green beans from a pan. And <u>Tut Tut</u> is moving around the room, cleaning and straightening.

CORRINE

Wait til you see Madeline's new house, Tut Tut. It is big, and on the bayou. Near where our other house used to be. Jean Claude is getting money from his family now, you know. They're rich … from the oil.

TUT TUT

I hope it looks like our other house, Madeline. High off the ground, a breezeway, high ceilings, and a big front gallery overlooking the bayou. I loved that house.

MADELINE

It's ranch style, Tut Tut.

TUT TUT

Ranch style?!

MADELINE

Low and enclosed. Made of brick.

TUT TUT

But you don't live on a ranch, Madeline.

CORRINE

That is what everybody is building now, Tut Tut! It's the latest thing. Those other kind of houses are too drafty – and hard to keep clean.

TUT TUT

But those other houses represent who we are, Momma. And where we live.

CORRINE

(Corrine stands up annoyed.) **You just do not seem to understand, do you!! You been gone from here too long!** (She slams the pan of beans on the table, then looks at Tut Tut.) **Things have become a whole lot different here lately. We getting to be like everybody else now. To have what everybody else has.**

TUT TUT

What do you mean by that, Momma?

CORRINE

Can't you see, Tut Tut? We walk side by side with the other people now. With our heads high. Like we are one of them.

TUT TUT

I have always been aware of this need for my people to be accepted, Momma. But is the price we have to pay for this "acceptance" worth losing our identity – and sacrificing our heritage? Our people were blessed with a culture that is rich and unique. With a way of life and a spirit that is our own. A wonderful way of life. Why would we want to be like everybody else? (Tut Tut walks away from her.) **It is baffling to me how easily my people have allowed their lives to be changed. Something they have always resisted. And in their desperation to finally be accepted, my people failed to realize two things. This time, they were not the "intruders." This time, they were not the ones to have to seek "acceptance." All of this makes no sense to me, unless, all of this is all about … the paycheck.** (Tut Tut walks over to Corrine and pulls down her collar.) **Just as I thought, Momma, your neck is turning red.** (Corrine defiantly pulls up her collar and walks away.)

CORRINE

There you go again, Tut Tut. Talking your "big talk." About your people, and their "wonderful way of life." But you left those people, and that way of life.

TUT TUT

Yes. I did leave, Momma - as you constantly remind me. But "leaving" does not necessarily mean you leave everything behind. My love and my loyalty for my culture is here … in my heart. And my heart is with me "wherever" I go. That way, I

can enjoy and respect the differences in the people that I am with – but still embrace who I am. Something you don't seem to understand, Mamma.

CORRINE

How can you stand there, Tut Tut, and say these things to me – when all I am trying to do is what is best for my family. Raising my family in a way that we can never, ever, be knocked down again. (She walks quickly upstage to the counter.)

MADELINE

(Jumping in trying to change the subject.) **Your house, Tut Tut! Tell us about your house. What kind of house do you live in?**

TUT TUT

I do not live in a house, Madeline. I live in an apartment.

CORRINE

(Corine turns to face Tut Tut,) **An apartment!?**

TUT TUT

There are no houses in Manhattan, Momma. The section of New York City that I live in only has apartment buildings.

CORRINE

(Corrine walks up to Tut Tut.) **But that is not descent, Tut Tut. Descent people do not live in apartments.**

TUT TUT

It is as decent as living in a trailer, Momma. Of which I've seen quite a few of since I've been here.

MADELINE

(Jumping in again) **Do you live in this apartment alone, Tut Tut?**

TUT TUT

Yes, Madeline, I do. But not really alone. There are about a hundred other apartments in my building.

CORRINE

A hundred!! Tut Tut! Aren't you scared!?

TUT TUT

No, Momma. I am not scared. We have a doorman and lots of security.

CORRINE

(Looking at Madeline) **That sounds like the projects to me.** (Back to Tut Tut.) **Don't tell me that you live in the projects, Tut Tut!**

TUT TUT

No, Momma. I do not live in the projects. I live on the eastside, in a very upscale apartment complex, in a very nice two-bedroom apartment, on the thirty second floor, with my own balcony, overlooking Central Park.

CORRINE

The thirty second floor!? A balcony!? (Corrine grabs a chair to steady herself.) **Now I know I'm never going to sleep again.** (She clumsily sits in the chair and proceeds to fan herself with her apron.) **Why do you always have to be different from the other people, Tut Tut?** (She begins to cry.)

MADELINE

(Trying to change the subject again) **Your job, Tut Tut!! Tell us about your job! What kind of work do you do?**

TUT TUT

I am in advertising, Madeline. On Madison Avenue.

CORRINE

(Corrine stops crying, and looks at Tut Tut) **Advertising!! ON THE STREET!? Just what is it that you are advertising, Tut Tut??**

TUT TUT

Theresa.

CORRINE

We did not raise you that way, Tut Tut!

TUT TUT

Theresa.

CORRINE

Just what are the people going to … (Corrine stops and looks at Tut Tut.) **Why do you keep saying, Theresa?**

TUT TUT

Because that is my name, Momma. The name that I use now.

CORRINE

Your name!?

TUT TUT

Given to me at birth, by you. (Corrine looks at her confused.) **After "Saint Theresa."**

CORRINE

Oh yes! (She smiles.) **Saint Theresa. I remember now. My favorite saint. Saint Theresa the little flower she was called, because she was so beautiful and delicate. Just like a flower. "When I get to Heaven - she would always say," I will let fall a shower of roses. When you were born, Tut Tut, I felt that you were one of those roses. Picked by her from the heavenly gardens and sent to me as a message of love. Which is why I gave you her name.**

TUT TUT

I remember you telling me this, Momma. And I was always touched by that gesture. But I was never able to express my gratitude, to let you know how much this meant to me. Because by that time, I was being referred to by another name. "Tut Tut." One that I soon became identified with.

CORRINE

Oh, that! That is just a nickname, Tut Tut. Like so many other Cajuns have.

TUT TUT

I know that, Momma. Usually given because of a "look" or a "mannerism." In my case – a look. Overweight, unattractive girls were called … "Tut Tut." (Corrine begins to become uncomfortable.) **And you want to know something, Momma, now that we are finally talking about it. I have always felt sorry for you. Sorry that I had let you down. That I had not turned out to be that delicate little flower sent to you from Heaven. And I always felt that you wished that you had saved that name for Madeline.**

CORRINE

(Standing up quickly) **Now you are talking foolishness, Tut Tut. <u>Nothing</u> but foolishness.**

TUT TUT

But it's alright, momma. Because I have finally "blossomed." <u>Look at me.</u> I am finally … Theresa. (Corrine turns and walks away from her, leaving Tut Tut standing there "speechless." Tut Tut pauses.) **But you knew that … didn't you Momma? You knew it the minute you saw me. And you do not like it. Because you do not know what to do with <u>Theresa</u>.** (Tut Tut walks over to Corrine and grabs her by her shoulders. She tries to turn her around.) **LOOK AT ME MOMMA!!!** (Corrine resists.) **PLEASE, MOMMA!! WILL YOU JUST … LOOK AT ME!!** (<u>Tut Tut</u> turns and walks away from her.) **When I left, you knew that I would not make it as Tut Tut, that I would be back with my tail between my legs – wanting and needing your control. Because as defiant as Tut Tut always was ... you knew her insecurities. And you knew how to use them against her. To convince her that … without you … she could not survive.** (<u>Tut Tut</u> turns and looks right at <u>Corrine</u>.) **But as Theresa … you know that I can survive - don't you, Momma. And <u>that</u> is killing you.**

CORRINE

And that is the "thanks" I get for trying to keep my family together.

Corrine walks defiantly toward stage right doorway. She opens it, walks through, and slams the door shut behind herself. Tut Tut walks to a chair and sits; staring at the floor. Madeline remains quiet - sitting in the rocking chair. There is a long pause.

MADELINE

Tut Tut. Oh, I'm sorry. I mean …Theresa.

TUT TUT

That's alright, Madeline. What is it?

MADELINE

***Es-tu une putain*?** (Tut Tut straightens up slowly, and looks at Madeline.) **Oh, I don't mean to offend you, Theresa. It's just that … ever since you have been here, everyone seems to think that - because you are living in that big city – you have become one.**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut hesitates.) Well --- I guess you could say, Madeline, that, I have had my fair share of "experiences". But, no, I am not "*une putain"*. Why do you ask?

MADELINE

Because I think that, I may be one.

Tut Tut's face registers a look of shock. She slowly stands up, picks up her chair, walks over to Madeline, places it next to her; and sits.

TUT TUT

Just what are you trying to say to me, Madeline?

MADELINE

Before Jean Claude, I had never "been" with anyone else. Or anyone else since. Sometimes. (She pauses.) **Sometimes, I wonder what it would be like to, you know … be with another. Oh!! Not that I have any complaints about Jean Claude, and I still love him "so very much". But sometimes …**

TUT TUT

Sometimes you pretend that you are with somebody else?

MADELINE

(She stands up quickly.) **How did you know that?!**

TUT TUT

(Tut Tut stands up also.) **And you are afraid of those thoughts and what they mean.**

MADELINE

But it is only pretend, Theresa. I swear it is.

TUT TUT

Those are called "fantasies," Madeline. Private thoughts people have. Very common with women in your situation. Nothing that you should be afraid of, or ashamed of Madeline. (She takes Madeline's hand.) **But you have always been afraid. Of everything. You do not have to be afraid anymore, Madeline. Because you are now with someone who approves, and understands … and loves you --- just the way you are.** (Pause) **What if I told you that I have lived most of my life pretending.**

MADELINE

(Madeline looks at Tut Tut with a puzzled look.) **What do you mean by that, Tut Tut?**

TUT TUT

You know that I have always been different. Very different from the rest of you.

MADELINE

Yes, I know. And I have always admired you for that.

TUT TUT

But what you did not know, Madeline, was the confusion and fear that was going on inside of me. Confusion about what it was that was different about me … yet fear of finding out. Resulting in feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and self-hate. (Tut Tut walks away from Madeline.) **But it was during that period of my life - when I was going through the slow and tedious process of recovering from my facial burns - that I was encouraged by Maw Maw to also use that time - to take a deep and honest look at myself. To explore my inner feelings. To get in touch with, and accept, who it is that I really was. And to learn to love and embrace that person.** (Tut Tut turns back and looks at Madeline.) **Then to surround myself with people who understand and respects me – just the way I am.**

MADELINE

(Madeline is frozen in place … listening to every word that Tut Tut has said. She walks up to her and takes her hand.) **I have always loved and respected you as my sister … just the way you are. So why would I want to change or feel any different about you, now.** (She wraps her arms around Tut Tut. They embrace, then she looks at Theresa.) **And from now on - there will be no more being "afraid" or "pretending" from either one of us.** (They look at each other and laugh.) **Do you remember those times when … as young girls growing up … we would sit on the edge of the bayou and talk about "things."** (She gets teary-eyed**.) I miss you, Theresa. I have no one that I can talk to now.**

Stage right door opens suddenly. Tut Tut and Madeline move away from each other and appear to be busy. Corrine enters.

CORRINE

Where are the men?! They should be here by now! The sun will be going down soon. Corrine walks across the room to stage left door and looks out. Then she goes to the stove to stir in the pots.)

MADELINE

They may have stopped at the barroom for a beer. Sometimes they do that.

CORRINE

That is only on Fridays! At the end of the week. (She stops what she is doing.) **Listen. I hear a car coming up the lane.**

MADELINE

That's them. I can tell by the sound of the car. But they are driving awfully fast. Faster than usual.

TUT TUT

I'll make some coffee. They are probably tired.

CORRINE

And I'll wipe the table. They must be hungry. (Corrine picks up a dishrag and begins to wipe the table. The sound of a car stopping and car doors slamming is heard. Corrine looks up.) **My, they sure are in a big hurry.** (Alcide and Jean Claude enter from stage left doorway. They look tense and anxious.) **Well, it's about time! Go wash up. We'll be eating soon.**

ALCIDE

It all happened very fast, Corrine. There was nothing we could do.

JEAN CLAUDE

The rope broke. I grabbed for it, but it slipped through my hands.

CORRINE

What are ya'll talking about? (She senses something is wrong.) **Where is Ju June?** (Alcide and Jean Claude take their hats off and look down**.) He's putting the car in the garage, isn't he?** (They don't answer. She puts down the dishrag and walks quickly to stage left doorway and looks out, then back at Alcide.) **Alcide! Where is my son?!!**

ALCIDE

(Alcide walks over to Corrine.) **He fell off the top of a storage tank.**

CORRINE

(She grabs her chest.) **Is he alright?!**

ALCIDE

(Choking up) **Our son, Corrine** (He pauses.) **is no longer with us.**
Corrine collapses. Alcide and Jean Claude grab her and sit her in a chair. Tut Tut rushes over to console her and Madeline brings her a glass of water. After Corrine has recovered from the shock she hands the glass back to Madeline and looks at Alcide.

CORRINE

Was he alone, Alcide, when he…

ALCIDE

No. Jean Claude and I were there, on each side of him. Each holding a hand.

CORRINE

Did he suffer?

ALCIDE

No. His passing was peaceful. He just looked at me, smiled, and said, "Tell Momma … (Corrine sits up) **that my favorite was … her chicken gumbo."** (They all look at each other and smiled.) **Then he closed his eyes … and went.** (Corrine begins to weep softly.)

Alcide walks to the telephone and picks it up.

ALCIDE

I have to call Addie Thibodeaux.

CORRINE

(Corrine looks at Alcide) **Addie Thibodeaux! Who owns the funeral home?**

ALCIDE

Yes. We have to make the arrangements.

CORRINE

NO!!! (Corrine leaps out of her chair and scurries across the room. She grabs the telephone out of Alcide's hand and throws it to the floor.) **MY CHILD WILL NOT BE PUT IN A FUNERAL HOME!!!**

ALCIDE

But that is what everybody is doing now, Corrine.

CORRINE

I do not "give a damn" what everybody is doing now!! This is our son, Alcide. Our flesh and blood. Not some "dog" that was killed on the road … that we would throw in the bayou. Our son is going to be here … with us. In our home. His home. With the people who love him. THE WAY IT USED TO BE. (She turns.) **Madeline, help**

me to find the purple cloths. It has been a long time. I cannot remember where I put them.

MADELINE

They are in the second drawer of the chest, Momma.

CORRINE

Good. (Corrine walks to the chest and takes out the "purple cloths.") **Ya'll help me to put them over all of the mirrors.** (They proceed to cover the ones in the kitchen.) **If my son's soul has not left his body yet, I do not want it to get lost and confused by seeing itself in a mirror. I want my son to have a fast and pleasant ascension into Heaven. Come. Let us go to cover the ones in the parlor.** (They leave thru stage right doorway.)

The lighting gets darker; changing to shades of purple. The dancers (dressed in black) run back and forth across the stage holding long purple clothes fluttering in the air: covering up the entrances of the family and cast members as they enter and position themselves on stage. The sound of praying is heard as people enter from the wings. The dancers leave the stage as the stage slowly gets dark.

It is the night of the wake.

The lighting slowly returns to normal. Cast members are seen gathered in front of and thru the stage right doorway – indicating that the parlor is full and the crowd is spilling into the kitchen. The family is gathered stage left. Everyone is wearing black; Women with veils – men with hats. They all have rosaries in their hands. Corrine is sitting in a chair next to Alcide, surrounded by the family. Maw Maw is in her wheel chair.

CORRINE

I wish Tante Fen and Tante Na were here. Fen was the best when it came to leading the Rosary. She would say it in Cajun French.

FATHER BOURGEOIS

(Father Bourgeois enters from stage right door. The crowd parts to let him through. He walks up to the family.) **The Rosary is about to begin. Would the family please follow me into the parlor.**

Corrine stands and takes Alcide's arm. The family walks slowly toward stage right door, being led by Father Bourgeois. Maw Maw is being pushed by Jean Claude.

Tante Fen and Tante Na appear suddenly in stage left doorway. Tante Fen is walking with great difficulty, being helped by Tante Na. Everyone turns to look at them.

CORRINE

Fen!! Na!! You got here just in time! (Corrine indicates with her hands.) **Vien ici. Come and be with us.** (The men rush to Tante Fen to assist her**.)**

Maw Maw says something to Jean Claude and he pushes her to the chest. She takes something out of the top drawer that is wrapped in a white cloth. Then he pushes her to Tante Fen, and helps her to stand up in front of her.

MAW MAW

This is for you, Fen. (Maw Maw hands her the white cloth. Tante Fen accepts it. She opens up the white cloth and takes out "the toy car.") **I know that Ju June would want you to have it.** (They embrace.)

(Tante Fen motions for Adam to come to her. She hands him "the toy car.") **This is for you, Adam.** (He takes it, and his face lights up. He wraps his arms around Tante Fen's waist as she pulls him to her.) Jean Claude takes Maw Maw and Adam back to the family. The men proceed to assist Tante Fen to walk toward stage right doorway; as she says the rosary in Cajun French. The crowd parts to let them thru as the congregation answers her prayer.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 3

The kitchen. Three days later. Corrine is sitting in the rocker, stage right, rocking gently and staring straight ahead. Alcide and Tut Tut are standing together, stage left. Maw Maw is sitting in her wheelchair upstage – dozing.

TUT TUT

I'm worried about Momma. She has been spending all of her time sitting in that chair … rocking and staring, … rocking and staring.

ALCIDE

Just like her poor departed father did, Tut … I mean, Theresa, after he lost everything. And he and your Maw Maw had to move in with me and Corrine.

TUT TUT

What do you mean, Papa?

ALCIDE

Every day he would sit on the front porch in that chair, and rock and stare … rock and stare. Every day, all day, we would hear the sound of the chair creaking … creak, creak, creak. Until one day … the creaking stopped. We all knew what that meant. We went to the front porch and, sure nuff, there he was … dead. He had rocked himself to his grave.

TUT TUT

Why did he do that, Papa?

ALCIDE

Discouragement. Giving up. No more reason to live. Your grandfather had been a very rich man at one time, Theresa. The richest on the bayou. He owned all of the land around here for as far as a crow can fly. Inherited from his father, whose father had settled here and staked claim. The main house, that Corrine grew up in, was the biggest and most elegant on the bayou. Surrounded by tenant houses where the people who worked the place lived. Black and white. All living and working together. All helping each other. I grew up in one of those tenant houses. Those were good days, Theresa. I can still see the old man; riding pasture, tending cattle, and working the fields. Your Maw Maw; bustling about, taking care of house and yard, being the "Grande Dame" of the place. Both of them working side by side with us. Sharing everything. Always making sure we all had plenty to eat.

TUT TUT

So, what happened?

ALCIDE

(Alcide looks down, ponders for a while, then looks up.) **Every few months this boat, with these same four men on it, would come up the bayou and stop to visit with us. We really did not know who they were or where they came from. But they were very friendly and always brought gifts; along with barrels of whiskey and rum. We would slaughter a few pigs, make a big gumbo, and have a party. Une fete d'aime. Sometimes lasting for a few days. We began to look forward to their visits and to the sound of their horn … toot, toot, toot … as they came up the bayou. All except the pigs and the chickens, of course. The pigs would start to squeal and the chickens would run and hide.** (They laugh.) **What we did not know was - that these men were getting the old man drunk. Very drunk, and making him sign papers. Before long he had lost everything; including the house and the land, taken over by these men and sold at auction for huge profits. Everybody lost, everything.** (He looks down again, pauses for a while, then looks up.) **Except for me … I was the lucky one. I got Corrine.**

Madeline and Jean Claude enter stage left doorway with Adam. He is holding the toy car to his chest. Alcide and Tut Tut turn to look at them. Madeline brings her finger to her lips to quiet them, then pushes Adam toward Corrine. He walks over to her and grabs the side of the chair, stopping it from rocking.

ADAM

Je' t' aime, Maw Maw. (No response from Corrine. He looks at Madeline and Jean Claude who beckons for him to try again.) **Je' t' aime comme les cochon aime la boue.** (He laughs - but still no response.) **Do you know how big that is, Maw Maw!?** (He throws his arms open as wide as he can and stands as close to the chair as he can.) **GROSE COMME CA!!** (He remains standing there looking right at her.)

Corrine turns her head slowly and looks at him. She throws her head back and lets out a hearty laugh. She reaches out, grabs him, and pulls him to her.

CORRINE

Au mon chere bebe, your Maw Maw love you too, you know. (She kisses him, then pulls the throw off her legs and stands up, giving directions.) **Alcide, go in the yard and wring a chicken's neck. Madeline, put on a pot of rice, and Tut…I mean, Theresa, turn on the oven and put in some sweet potatoes. I'm going to make a big gumbo.**

TUT TUT

Momma!! Are you alright?

CORRINE

I'm fine, Theresa. I'm fine. I was just sitting there, "doing some thinking." Something I have not done in a very long time.

MADELINE

But, Momma, I have never heard you laugh before.

CORRINE

I know, Madeline. I know. But things are going to be a whole lot different now. (Corrine walks to the table and proceeds to pick sweet potatoes from a dishpan, wiping them and handing them to Tut Tut.) **I have been a very foolish woman, you know. And a blind one. So many things before my eyes – I did not see, that I did not want to see. So many blessings, I would not accept. Why? Because they were different. And "different" has always been a problem for me. It scares me. It bringing back the pain and hardship suffered by my people for being different.** (She hands the last potato to Tut Tut who goes to the stove and puts them in the oven.) **But while sitting in that chair … thinking, I thought. If the Good Lord - who created everything and everyone - had wanted things to be the same … He would have made them that way! But did He? NO. He made things different. Why? Because that is the way He wanted it!! Through His eyes, using His infinite wisdom, He saw "different" as something that can be a good thing. Yet,** (She laughs.) **at the same time …it can also be difficult and boring.** (Pause) **I have always trusted in the ways of my Lord. So why am I doubting him now.**

(Corrine walks to the counter to picks up a bowl of dough covered with a towel, and sets it on the table. She removes the towel and begins to test the dough with her finger.) **Maybe, He is testing us. Putting us all together like this to see how we will rise. Sometimes, to rise beautifully. But other times,** (She dumps the dough on the table) **to fall flat. THAT is when the work begins.** (She proceeds to knead the dough as she talks.) **You roll it. You pound it. You pull on it. You work out the lumps. BUT … at the same time, being very careful not to destroy any of those wonderful ingredients that you started with. But to blend them. You blend them together until they begin to get smooth.** (She indicates the dough.) **Then it will be ready. Ready to put in the oven. Just like that, WE will be ready. All of us, together, to be with Him in Heaven … for eternity.** (She wipes her brow with the towel as she walks downstage center to the apron of the stage to talk directly to the audience.) **And you want to know something.**

Just between you and me. I'm looking forward to Heaven. But I sure in hell hope that <u>it</u> is not going to be boring. (She laughs as she pulls up a chair and sits.) **But I never did see things that way before. I would just keep asking my Lord for help. <u>Help me to understand! Send me an answer!</u> So, HE did. HE sent me a son. A good son, one who loved and accepted "everything" and "everyone." I was hoping that might open my eyes, that I might learn from him. But did I?** (Pause) **NO. So, He took him back. He took him away from me. Did that open my eyes? (She stands up**.) I must not allow my son to have died in vain.

Corrine walks back to the counter, with her back to the audience. Everyone on stage is looking at her**.**

TUT TUT

Momma.

CORRINE

What is it, Theresa? And make it fast. I have a lot to do.

TUT TUT

Call me, Tut Tut, Momma. I am not going to need the name, Theresa, any more. (Corrine turns and looks at her.) I am not going back to New York, Momma. I'm staying here, with all of you.

CORRINE

(Corrine walks up to her.) **Oh no! you are not, Theresa. You can't stay. Maw Maw is moving back in with us and will need her room back. Besides, how can I go to visit you in New York, if you are here?**

TUT TUT

Visit me! In New York??

CORRINE

Yes! I want to see what the "big deal" is bout that "big city" that "everybody" talks about. (She laughs.)

TUT TUT

But things are a whole lot different there, Momma.

CORRINE

Not "different," Theresa. <u>Interesting.</u>

TUT TUT

You're right, Momma. Interesting. (She looks at the others with a smirk on her face.) **<u>Very interesting</u>!**

CORRINE

I want to meet your friends, your neighbors, the people you work with. I want to know all about them. Who they are, where they come from, and how they live. And I want to tell them about us. About "our" wonderful way of life. (She stops and looks at Tut Tut.) **We are not trash; you know. We are as good as anybody else.**

TUT TUT

Yes, Momma. (She laughs.) **I know that. I have always known that.**

CORRINE

Besides, look at you. How good you look since you have been living there. You want to know something, Theresa. (Corrine turns and strikes a pose.) **I think I could use a little makeover, myself.** (Everyone laughs.)

MADELINE

But, Momma. What about the neighbors? What if they do not approve of your new lifestyle. What will you say to them?

CORRINE

I'll say. HAVE A COKE! (Everyone laughs. Corrine moves downstage.) **If there was only someone, someone from here, who could spread the word. Who could let the whole world know about us.**

JEAN CLAUDE

(Jean Claude is standing at stage left door.) **Corrine. That Prudhomme boy from down the lane is at your door again. Along with his friend, the Rodrigue boy. He says he has something for you.**

CORRINE

(Annoyed.) **He's burnt something again!!** (Walking toward stage left door.) **Every time he burns something, he brings it to us to eat. He calls it blackened.**

MAW MAW

(Blurting out.) **Oh boy, burnt food. My favorite.** (They all turn to look at Maw Maw and laugh.)

CORRINE

(Corrine yells from stage left door.) **Paul! You better get your fat butt away from my door! And George - take that silly little blue dog wit ya!**

BLACKOUT THE END

About the author. Earl La Martiniere was born, raised, and early educated in Fifth Ward, a small community near Marksville Louisiana. He went on to earn his B.A. at Louisiana State University, and subsequently taught in the New Orleans school system. Then, Earl accepted a scholarship at Jacob's Pillow Dance Center for Artists in Massachusetts. From there he moved to New York and danced on Broadway with numerous stars, including Chita Rivera, the famed American actress, singer, and dancer (West Side Story). Later, he moved out west where he performed in California and Las Vegas. This led to Earl being enticed to develop this own dance and musical productions in Los Angeles.

Approximately 15 years ago, Earl retired from the dance profession, and moved back and resumed teaching in New Orleans, and was asked to evaluate talented inner-city students in the greater New Orleans area. Upon Chita Rivera encouraging him to put his memoirs of early upbringing on paper as a play, he started to jot down notes. After Earl retired from the New Orleans school system, he pulled these notes together and started to write a performance play. This manuscript is a fictional play based on Earl's upbringing in Avoyelles Parish, with the setting in southwest Louisiana.

Copyright certificate of registration to On The Bayou was issued under the seal of the United State Code PAu4-298-060 to Earl F. La Martiniere on April 1, 2026. All rights of this document are reserved and may not be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the author or his representative. This document was prepared as a manuscript that can easily be converted into a performing play. To discuss the book or play, contact Coral Lamartiniere at Coral.lam43@gmail.com

Should you be interested in more information on the Lamartiniere family, you can access the book The Lamartiniere Family, Seven Generations in France and Louisiana authored by Coral Lamartiniere by going online to archive.org. This book includes certified genealogical reproductions from France and Louisiana, a copy of the Lamartiniere family tree, accounts of the immigration of the first Lamartinieres and their early lives in Louisiana, followed by stories from their ensuing families. To access this document, type into your browser 1) archive.org, 2) Lamartiniere Family, 3) click on GO, and 4) after the title page comes up: double click on the map and the entire book will be available as a *PDF* file (right side option). From there, you may down-load or print a copy. (I advocate color printing.).